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TRAITS OF NATURE,

BY

MISS BURNEY.

VOL. 4.

TRAITS OF NATURE,

BY

MISS BURNEY,

AUTHOR OF CLARENTINE, &c.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

La plupart des hommes employent la première partie de leur vie à rendre l'autre misérable.——La Bruyere.

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TRAITS OF NATURE.

CHAP. I.

RESTITUTION.

ADELA did not make the discovery of the prize awaiting her acceptance till nearly a week subsequent to its having been consigned to its present resting place. Her mornings, during that time, had been chiefly dedicated to drawing; and her evenings had been engrossed by a succession of engagements abroad. Lord Ennerdale, who, at first, felt some anxiety as to the result of his little stratagem, and was particularly solicitous to know upon whom Adela's suspicions would most strongly rest, had now nearly dismissed the whole transaction from his mind. He concluded, that whatever had been its effect, she had no design to mention it in his presence, and, of course, it was far from being his intention ever to make to it himself the slightest allusion.

Without the slightest emotion, therefore, one evening that he and Mr. Annesley were in Cumberland Place, he saw her, as soon as tea was over, bring her work-box to the table at which her sister was sitting, and begin turning over its contents.

Mr. Annesley, laughing at the profoundly indifferent air with which she seemed to make this review, approached her chair, and asked what interesting occupation she was going to engage in?

"The most interesting one," answered she, "which this box seems capable of affording me, is that of putting its contents in better order. If my mind was in a state of as much confusion, my sister might apply to me an expression which, during the London season, she sometimes applies to herself—she might tell me, that my thoughts were *in a litter*."

"I like the expression amazingly," cried Mr. Annesley—"five days out of every seven which I spend in town, it would describe my own case exactly. Yet, I should be disposed to keep my brains in much better order, could I do it without being reduced to absolute solitude. In this great

city, you must either live in a whirl, or stagnate in a dead calm, and resign yourself to being utterly forgotten. How few houses are open for friendly, and unceremonious evening visits! — This is almost the only family where I can obtain admittance without a formal invitation: nearly every where else, I am either told that the ladies are dressing to go out—that they are actually *gone* out—or that they have an assembly that evening at their own residence. I then drive to a public place, or a club; at the first I am sickened by a repetition of the same dancing, the same singing, or the same acting which I have already seen and heard twenty times before; — or, at the second, I am kept up half the night losing my money at cards, my spirits by late hours, or my patience at my own folly! — What is a man to do, however, who is not very studiously inclined, and never spent a solitary evening in his library since he had one? Lady Isabella would think it rather extraordinary, when decked out for a party, to be invited to share my retirement! And without a regular, set invitation, dispatched

three weeks or a month before hand, we can get no one to come near us."

"I am told," said Lord Ennerdale, "that the grievance of which Annesley so justly complains, is almost peculiar to the state of society in this country. Men who have been recently abroad, at Paris, for instance, aver that the evening parties there, are held upon so easy and amicable a footing, that every individual of any respectability, in addition to the resource of public places, has the freedom of half a dozen private houses, where he is received as a friend, and where he is secure of meeting a dozen or twenty pleasant people, from whose looks, conversation, and manners all restraint is banished, save that which is imposed by the customary rules of good breeding.—Before midnight, they separate, with the option of again assembling the succeeding evening."

"For your sake, Adela," cried Mr. Somerville, "I have sometimes wished that your sister were not so much restricted as she is, just at present, from giving large parties: but Lord Ennerdale has drawn so

agreeable a picture of more select society, that I dare say you will henceforward wish for nothing so much as an evening passed with a dozen or twenty—or if we cannot make up the full number—*half* a dozen *pleasant people*, chosen from amongst established friends."

"This compliment to my domestic taste," said Adela, "is bestowed upon me rather at an unlucky moment, and if you were often wont, my dear brother, to reprove by implication, I could do no less than think that such was your present intention. Till to-night, I have lived in a crowd the whole week!—How promising a beginning for a votary of small, select parties!"

Her eye, during this speech, had rested upon the direction of the little packet which Lord Ennerdale had conveyed into her box, and which now, without reflecting upon what it was likely to contain, she carelessly broke open, saying—

"I totally forget when, and why, this parcel was so mysteriously sealed up."

As she uttered these words, the ring and broach fell upon her lap, and an air of astonishment amounting almost to distrust of

her own eye-sight, took instant possession of her features.

Lord Ennerdale, nearly as much surprised by the tardiness of this discovery, as she was by the discovery itself, turned hastily away, and began silently pacing up and down the room.

"When did you buy these pretty trinkets, Adela?" said Mrs. Somerville, taking them from the lap of her perplexed and motionless sister—"You were in a marvellously extravagant humour to make *two* such purchases at one time."

"It is some unaccountable mistake!" cried Adela, "They are not mine, I assure you."

"Not by the vulgar process of common traffic, perhaps," said Mr. Annesley, contemplating with a smile the writing upon the envelope: "but by gift, they indubitably are yours. Look at this direction;—can any thing be plainer, clearer, I was going to say, fairer:—but fairness and disguise are terms which accord not well together."

Lord Ennerdale most sincerely wished himself in the middle of the square. Yet,

to avoid the singularity of being the only one present who seemed uninterested in what was passing, he compelled himself again to approach the table.

"Disguise?" repeated Mrs. Somerville; "Do you think, Mr. Annesley, that the writing is disguised?"

"Nothing can be more palpable. The fair Adela will, however, doubtless, in time, elucidate to her own satisfaction this mysterious piece of gallantry. Meanwhile, I beg to congratulate her on the good taste of her invisible friend. I have seldom seen prettier ornaments."

"No friend," said Adela, a little proudly, "either visible or invisible, out of my own family, could design to make me such a present; and from none, out of my own family, would I chuse to accept it."

"But how can you help yourself?" demanded Mr. Somerville—"Here are the trinkets; they are directed to you, and to no one else; they are in your custody—in your hands; you know not whence they are sent;—then, how are you to get rid of them?"

"I know the shop where they must have

been bought," answered Adela, hastily; "and to-morrow, I shall entreat my sister to go thither with me, and get the whole matter explained."

"Do you think, Ennerdale," said Mr. Annesley, with ironical gravity, "that the method which Miss Cleveland purposes to pursue, is likely to effect a discovery?"

"It seems promising," answered Lord Ennerdale, in a voice somewhat less steady than usual, and secretly provoked at the significance with which the question had been asked.

Adela was struck by the tone in which this brief reply was uttered. She raised her eyes, and, for a moment fixed them on the earl's face. An instantaneous persuasion of the truth flashed upon her mind. He ventured not, conscious that she was regarding him, to direct a glance towards her: but the expression of his features, the heightened colour in his cheeks, the downcast, and somewhat disconcerted air with which he affected to be surveying the feigned handwriting,—all these were indications which, to his transient, but penetrating observer, imparted full and perfected conviction. She

dropped her eyes in silent confusion; a bright blush stole across her face, and taking up the trinkets, she replaced them in the repository whence they had been drawn,—and totally desisted from all further animadversion upon the subject.

Lord Ennerdale was perplexed how to interpret this conduct. He sometimes flattered himself that he had been guessed, and faintly indulged a hope that the offering which he deemed so humble, was unresentingly accepted. Her pride of heart, and the complete impartiality with which she had ever treated him, speedily, however, dispelled these gratifying ideas, and substituted in their place his wonted insecurity and diffidence.

Mrs. Somerville, perceiving that her sister was averse from saying, at the present moment, any thing further of the ornaments, started other subjects of conversation, and assisted in supporting them with such spirit and pleasantry, that the remainder of the time they spent together, was rendered delightful to all parties.

When the two sisters retired for the

night, Mrs. Somerville enquired how it happened that Adela should know the shop where the anonymous gift had probably been purchased?

"I recollected the ring," replied Adela, "the moment I saw it. Whilst I was at Lady Isabella's, I fancied myself, for a few minutes, its legal possessor."

She then gave a clear account of the whole affair; and in excuse for not having mentioned it sooner, added—

"I was unwilling, without necessity, to speak of Alicia's thoughtlessness in regard to the seal and bracelets. The surprise, and momentary chagrin with which I found them charged to me, is over now, and I entreat that nothing may ever be said to her upon the subject."—

Mrs. Somerville passed some very pointed strictures upon the conduct, in this affair, of her absent sister, and could with difficulty be induced to promise, that when they met, she would observe such total forbearance as Adela solicited. Yet, in the end, she gave her word to remain silent; and it was then agreed, that they should drive together to

Jackson's in the morning, and endeavour to obtain from him all the information which he could furnish.

The intelligence procured from this source, may be easily conjectured. The jeweller disclaimed all knowledge of the broach: but the ring, he perfectly remembered having sold to a lady, an entire stranger to him, who had paid for it at the moment of its purchase, and who, having consulted him on the practicability of repairing an old-fashioned inlaid casket, and found him reluctant to engage in the unprofitable enterprize, had carried it away with her, and never appeared in his shop since.

The unknown lady, and the old-fashioned inlaid casket, puzzled the two sisters extremely. Mrs. Somerville declared that the business was involved in so much obscurity that she could discern through it no ray of light; whilst Adela kept her thoughts in her own bosom—but, from that day forward, wore her new decorations with a frequency and apparent preference which she manifested for no other ornaments in her possession.

A fortnight now elapsed, at the end of

which, all preliminary arrangements being adjusted, and young Ossely restored to sufficient health and strength to bear the journey, it was determined, that his father should himself convey him to the tranquil and well-chosen abode which Mrs. Somerville had pointed out.

Yet to leave town at this moment, though Lord Ennerdale knew it to be a duty, was no trifling sacrifice. Adela, he not only heard from a hundred voices, but himself witnessed, was hourly becoming an object of greater attraction to the wealthy and ostentatious Sir Patrick Harley. Inert as that gentleman usually proved himself, and deficient in penetration, he yet possessed sagacity sufficient to be aware of the advantage he might derive from obtaining admission at Mr. Somerville's. They had long known each other, and had often met at General Cleveland's, but they never had visited. Sir Patrick engaged a reciprocal friend, to insinuate his wish of being upon terms of more established intimacy. The unsuspicious Somerville listened without repugnance to the hint; he left a card at Sir Patrick's door; Sir Patrick lost no time in returning

the visit, and to cement the incipient friendship, he invited Mr. Somerville to an epicurean repast. The invitation was accepted, and a short time after, Mr. Somerville repaid the obligation, by arranging for the Baronet a dinner-party at his own house.

On the day that it took place, the mistress of the mansion, too much indisposed to do the honours of her table, delegated the office to Mrs. Erington, her sister, newly arrived on a visit to her from Wales. Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley were likewise of this dinner: but Lord Ennerdale pleaded a prior engagement.

He knew, indeed, that it would be impossible, now the baronet had gained footing at the house, to avoid frequently encountering him. He could by no means brook, however, being present at his first introduction.

The rich man's devotion to the portionless Miss Cleveland, was too much talked of in the societies which they frequented, to leave the Earl any doubt that Mr. Somerville received him with a consciousness of his motives for seeking the intimacy: and he felt hurt, and almost indignant at what

appeared to him such an instance of tergiversation in one whom he had hitherto believed so firmly his friend. His delicacy, his good taste, independent of his love, revolted from the odious idea of seeing Adela encouraged to listen to a man in all respects, but affluence, so infinitely her inferior. His own continual and open intercourse in the family, was beginning, by many of the shrewdest observers, to be attributed to convenience and self-interest. It was known that Mrs. Somerville had admitted both his children beneath her roof, and had infinitely contributed by her assiduity and kindness to the recovery of Lord Ossely; and it was now asserted, that the Earl's conduct towards Miss Cleveland was expressive of no more than the affection of a partial and indulgent brother.

His deep and heart-felt interest in whatever related to her, was so quiet, and though unremitting, so devoid of glare and obtrusion, that its latent motive escaped the public eye. Her conduct was, in every particular, so truly consonant to his ideas of correct propriety, that, for distrustful observation when she was in society, he saw not

the remotest excuse. Grace, modesty, and the most perfect exemption from coquetry, marked her deportment wherever she appeared. Admiration neither disposed her to conceit, nor did impertinence or neglect depress her into insignificance. Married men, (amongst whom she more uniformly found partizans, than amongst bachelors looking out, as she was supposed to be doing herself, for an advantageous establishment) she invariably treated, when too assiduous, with a sort of ironical politeness that baffled and disconcerted them. Consequential and saucy girls of fashion, she calmly disdained; wealthy blockheads, publicly avowing their ambition to obtain a handsome wife, she frigidly discouraged; and antiquated beaux, proud of being seen in the train of youth and beauty, she laughed at, or overlooked. A few, a *very* few of a superior class, who sought her for her spirit and conversation, with no views of undue gallantry, selfishness, or vanity, she behaved to with the most friendly and distinguished complacency.

Seeing her thus courteous to all real merit, Lord Ennerdale's connections began to do

her the slight justice of believing, that she had no design upon his heart—and he began very seriously to fear, that she had herself no heart on which any design *could* succeed. The dust she trod on, he was persuaded, could not be more indifferent to her than Sir Patrick's gold—neither could the lightest breeze that fanned her cheek, be more calmly unheeded than had hitherto appeared to be his own attentions. How, and by whom would she at length be won? Was Talbot Cleveland the happy object for whom she reserved her tenderness? Or, marrying merely to please her family, would she accept Sir Patrick, and rest content with the reciprocation of those affections which her natural connections inspired? It was impossible! A torpidity of heart so exquisitively insipid, could never be the portion of the generous, animated and youthful Adela! "Her hour," cried he, "may not be yet arrived. But arrive it *must*. And, oh! that it may, at last, be *my* happy fate to effect its approach!"

CHAP. II.

COUNSELLING.

The dinner visit of Sir Patrick Harley passed off with no peculiarity of incident to distinguish it from other visits, or from other dinners. Mr. Annesley, it is true, on beholding the baronet admitted with so few recommendations beyond those of a well-filled purse, to an intimacy at Mr. Somerville's, relapsed into worldly suspicions of the family disinterestedness, and half persuaded himself, that the *ingot* was marked, in case of a failure with Adela, as a prize for her widowed sister, the beautiful and brilliant Mrs. Erington. But Mrs. Erington, ignorant of every thing relating to him, except his name and his ugliness, turned from him with secret disgust, and directed all her voluntary attention to the other guests who formed the little party.

Being alone with Adela the next morning, she abruptly asked her, why, and how long, that frightful old Baronet had been admitted to visit in the family?—"There is prodigious bad taste," she added, "in

expending money and time upon the entertainment of such dull guests, in a city abounding with all that is gay, amusing, and agreeable; and I wonder that Elinor and you permit Somerville to encourage him."—

"Yesterday," replied Adela, "was Sir Patrick's first appearance here. I have often seen him at my uncle's, but unless you chuse to attract him by a few gracious smiles, he will probably never be a frequent visitor in this house."

"Oh, Heaven! The very sight of him, is enough to scare away smiles and graces for an eternity! He is absolutely hideous, and has so little expression of countenance, such a total incapacity of saying or looking an agreeable thing, that it is quite impossible to forget his deformity."

"Hush, hush, Alicia—you will be very sorry to have held such irreverend language, when you hear how many thousand charms are centered in his strong box!—I have been assured, that he is the richest commoner in England."

"Alas! How lamentable, that wealth should be so bestowed!—But if he is single

he is perhaps looking out for a helpmate. Do have him, Adela, and let me assist you to dispose of a little of his superfluous cash."

"I would do any thing in reason to oblige you," said Adela, laughing; "but this, I fear, is a flight of friendship sublimer than I can soar. Try and win him yourself, and don't be apprehensive of my asking to share his spoils."

"Oh, surely you need have no scruples on that subject, for whoever consents to marry him, he must, in his secret heart, be assured, takes him only to make ducks and drakes of his money. I should not hesitate to half ruin such a creature, first, as a punishment for embittering to me the possession of his fortune by tacking to it the incumbrance of his ugly person, and next, for the pleasure of forcing him to fly from his creditors, and ridding me of the sight of his odious visage. But exclusive of this ponderous gentleman, do confess, that our party yesterday was insufferably stupid. Mr. Annesley was the best of the set; he really has some vivacity and spirit: but his wife is a poor little yea-and-nay

sort of body. She is pretty, and looks fashionable, and *comme il faut*, and that is all that can be said of her. Pray, is she inclined to be jealous? She is exactly the sort of woman I should expect that absurdity from."

"I never remarked in her the slightest tendency of the kind."

"I am sorry for it. Had she been at all prone to that folly, it might have infused a little life and animation into her, to have set on foot immediately a violent flirtation with her *caro sposo*. As it is, I will let him alone, and direct my whole attack against her charming brother-in-law. How could Julius ever find in his heart to take aim against the life of so elegant a creature?"

"Dear Alicia, never allude to that horrible duel!—I cannot hear of it without regret, and an aching heart!"

"Well, well—I had much rather give a good comfortable heart-ache to Lord Ennerdale than to you! But, somehow,—I am not quite sure that he is the kind of man I ever could make much impression upon. *You* might, I am persuaded, Adela; why don't you try the experiment?"

Adela, colouring a little, but affecting to laugh, answered—

"I *will* try, on condition that you teach me how to set about it."

"Ah, my dear little sister, if you had any thoughts of setting about it in good earnest, you would require no instructor in the business! I really am astonished at your want of enterprize. He seems to me exactly such a lover as you would approve;—he is handsome, young, lively, and accomplished; and besides all this, he is a peer. Have you never reflected upon any of these little advantages?—I hope you have not the preposterous humility of fancying yourself his inferior? Know, that with beauty, birth, and education, a woman is inferior to no man in the universe!"

"It can answer no purpose to preach this doctrine to me: you should seek to impress it upon the understanding of your male auditors."—

"I let them infer it from my easy manner of treating them; not that there is any denying the usefulness of telling men what is right, and proper, and good for them, in still plainer language than any looks will

speak. Now, if I took this matter in hand with sober seriousness, I should have a great notion of telling the rich, that the best thing they can do, is to chuse wives that are poor and pretty; and to the pennyless, I should think it an act of charity to recommend, a total blindness to every species of beauty but that of a wealthy dowager of three-score. I am sadly afraid, that in the common course of events, the very reverse of this good system is the case; heirs marry heiresses; and half-starved boys marry half-starved girls. How shall we reform these pernicious practices, my dear Adela?"

"Why, you must ascend an eminence, on a market-day, in some of the principal towns and villages of the kingdom, and proclaim your opinion to the multitude in an eloquent harangue."—

"Here comes one," cried Mrs. Erington, looking through the window, "whom I should have more pleasure in haranguing upon this subject, than half his sex put together. Lord Ennerdale has just driven up to the door in the prettiest-looking, gay sort of open carriage I ever saw. How I should delight in a drive through the Park,

perched at his side in that exquisite car!— Heigho! I wish I had a few of Sir Patrick's odd thousands!"—

"But remember, that they are only to be had by perching yourself at *his* side!"

"Very true: and I am not sure, that the nausea of that, would not induce me, in all humility, to prefer an umbrella and pattens to the most splendid equipage which he could offer me."—

Lord Ennerdale was now announced, and immediately made his appearance.

"Oh, my Lord," cried the gay widow, scarcely allowing him time to ask either her or Adela how they did, "what a delicious little vehicle you came in!"

"I drove it hither," answered he, "to give Algernon an airing. It is much my interest, you know," added he, addressing Adela, "to court him into all the good-humour possible, before I undertake with him the projected journey into Northumberland. I am half afraid of that expedition. Yesterday, when I insinuated to him that such a removal was in meditation, he made a terrible wry face, and declared that

he should not like to go away from hence at all."—

"Tell him," said Adela, smiling, "that he is going to a place where he will have nothing more to do with nurses or nursery-maids!—No assurance will so effectually reconcile him to the journey, for they are, at present, the confirmed objects of his antipathy."—

She then left the room, to go and announce to the little boy the indulgent motive of his father's visit.

"You may congratulate yourself, my Lord," said Mrs. Erington, when she was gone, "on not having been at liberty yesterday, to accept Mr. Somerville's invitation. I pitied poor Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley, for that unwieldy baronet threw so oppressive a dulness over the day, that the air seems hardly yet to have recovered its lightness and elasticity."—

"Sir Patrick," said Lord Ennerdale, "is seldom spoken of with such severity by the young and the beautiful."—

"What claim has he to peculiar indulgence from those he so little resembles?"

"His profound adoration of both the attributes I have mentioned."

"Who could be flattered by adoration so stupidly testified? He says not a word, but dividing his worship between a plate-full of turbot, and a pretty female face, he alternately gazes at each with nearly equal tenderness, and leaves it doubtful at last which he prefers."

"Nay," resumed the Earl, with an air of mock gravity, "what higher compliment can he pay to a pretty face, than that of suffering it to enter into competition with the dearest inclination of his heart—good and costly cheer?"

"How supremely gratifying to female vanity! But let me tell you, my Lord, that the first man who presumed to make a merit of admitting *me* to any competition of the sort, I should send to dine at a tavern, and ogle the cook!"

She then, on Adela's re-appearance, enquired for Mrs. Somerville's visiting-book to make a list of persons to call upon, and gayly wishing Lord Ennerdale good morning, tripped away.

"I have brought you," said Adela, lead-

ing towards his father the now almost blooming Algernon, "the most grateful and happy little boy in the world; and his sweet sister, far from repining at his good fortune, is almost equally delighted to see him so alert and gay."

"Tell her, my dear Miss Cleveland, that she shall very soon be indulged with the same gratification: but as Algernon has been an invalid, I thought 'a lady was in the case,' that the first airing was due to him."

"I will certainly give her this kind message. But now, for Algernon's sake, let me hurry you away before the sun loses any of its warmth and brightness."

"I am going this moment: but suffer me first, with an officiousness which you must not attribute to impertinence—suffer me to give you, what you so seldom require, a little caution."....

"On what subject?" interrupted Adela, somewhat alarmed.

"During your short absence from the room," resumed he, "a servant brought in a parcel of books, and said, that they came from Mrs. Elmer, who had sent them for

your amusement, as something quite new. I mechanically opened one of the volumes, and saw the title of a work, which, though written by a female, I am well persuaded you would never wish to read. It is probable that Mrs. Elmer has lent these books without having given herself time to ascertain their character:—but she is wrong in having done so;—and you, dear Miss Cleveland, will require no further hint, to avoid throwing away your leisure upon such unworthy trash."

"I am inexpressibly obliged to you for this warning," cried Adela, in the most grateful accent; "it is truly considerate and friendly: but shall I tell you how you might add to the obligation? Assist me to tie up the books in paper, and ring for a servant to convey them back to Mrs. Elmer's immediately."

Lord Ennerdale smiled at her impatience to get rid of the proscribed volumes, and said—

"What reason will you assign to Mrs. Elmer for returning her loan so very expeditiously?"

"I will simply tell her, that a friend as-

sured me, it was a publication which I should do better not to read."

"And if she enquires for that friend's name?"

"You shall inform me yourself what you would, in that case, wish me to answer."

"I would wish you, most upright and ingenuous of human beings! to do me so much credit as to tell her, that it was at *my* recommendation you forbore casting your eye over these ill-principled pages. She merits to hear, since so unguarded in her intended kindnesses, the impropriety of lending productions with whose tendency she is not distinctly acquainted. Had she, with equal thoughtlessness, sent this book to Eudocia, I should openly have acted the brother, and told her my opinion, *viva voce*."

"It is enough, in the present instance, that you have avowed that opinion to *me*. I should be sorry were Mrs. Elmer to incur any mortification for an act which we agree in thinking was kindly meant, and from which your timely caution has warded off any mischief."

"Candid in your judgment of others, and open to conviction yourself, how much

real goodness and delicacy, amiable Adela, have you indicated during this little dialogue! Oh, that in all things, I possessed over you as much influence, as you allow me to exercise on a subject of mere literary taste!"

"You cannot," said Adela, a little embarrassed, "accuse me of having ever resisted your guidance when sensible of your wish to bestow it. But we may sometimes appear intractable when, in reality, we are only dull of understanding."

"I believe," cried the earl, half-laughing, yet internally chagrined at her pretended unconsciousness, "it would be no very extravagant proof of rashness, to assert, that intractability is the spirit which solely actuates you at this moment! I have no great faith in the dulness of understanding you would plead.—You certainly are the most extraordinary instance of frankness, and something which is *not* frankness, that I ever met with in the same character!"

To Adela's great relief, young Ossely, tired of so long a delay, now began urging his father to depart; and having no pretence

for further procrastination, Lord Ennerdale unwillingly bade her good morning, took the child by the hand, and left the room. Adela instantly followed, laden with Mrs. Elmer's books, which she gave to a servant in the hall, with directions to carry them to that lady's house directly. Then, slowly re-ascending the stairs, and turning her head as she did so, she received from the earl a parting bow as he mounted his carriage, after which, he gently touched the horses, and drove away.

Adela could not deny herself the gratification of relating to Mrs. Somerville in the course of the day, the purport of this friendly little conference.

"It proves," said that lady, highly pleased by the communication, "two very material points. First, it must convince you, that my opinion of Mrs. Elmer's inconsiderate character, was by no means too severe; and secondly, it must exculpate Lord Ennerdale from all suspicion of wishing you to pay undue court to her. This early friend of yours, Adela,—this amiable Algernon, certainly thinks, that you have a *soul* to be

saved, though, by this time, I believe, he is pretty positively convinced, that you have no *heart* either to save or to lose!"

Adela laughed, but hastened away; and two days afterwards, young Ossely, under the protection of his father, commenced his northern journey.

The parting scene between him and his two fair patronesses, was rendered distressing in the highest degree, by the extreme reluctance which he evinced to quit them. Round Adela, in particular, he clung with a fondness and affliction which no promises or soothings could abate. She had, unwittingly, indeed, but decidedly, superceded her sister in his affection. Mrs. Somerville had repeatedly found it necessary to check his little humours, and to dispute his will: Adela, however, deeming it no part of *her* duty to play the preceptress, had stolen away during these unpleasant, but salutary contests, and had awaited a serener moment to bestow upon him her attention. Then, all compliance, sweetness and good-humour, she had again appeared before him, the indulgent partaker of his pastimes, the smiling auditress of his childish joys, or the

gentle soother of his transient sorrows. No restrictions, no remonstrances ever proceeded from her lips, no austerity ever sat upon her brow. She came like a brilliant sunshine after a depressing gloom; she re-animated him to gayety, she dispelled all lurking resentment from his youthful heart, and imparted to it a warmth of trust and gladness, which she only, in an equal degree, had ever possessed the power of communicating to him.

So vehement was his anguish at the idea of leaving her, and so resolute his determination to cling to her till drawn away by absolute force, that Mrs. Errington, partly from compassion, and partly from an ever-ready inclination to engage in an idle frolic, said—

"You have so strangely bewitched this poor child, Adela, that the least you can do, is to go with him the first stage of his journey.—I will accompany and take care of you back."

Young Ossely understood enough of this proposal to know, that it implied a scheme for delaying his separation from his favourite; he fervently strained his arms round her

neck, and half smiling, half in tears, said eagerly—

"Oh, do, do—pray do go with me!"

"I wish," cried Adela, to her inconsiderate sister, "you had not mentioned this impracticable project in poor Algernon's hearing. At the end of the stage he would probably be just as reluctant to part from us as he is at this moment, and there would be all this scene to go through again."

"Perhaps not," said Lord Ennerdale; "perhaps the variety of objects on the road would dissipate his thoughts, and lessen his regret. But let us refer the matter to Mrs. Somerville. I am too much interested in the event of the deliberation, to vote with any impartiality."

Mrs. Somerville, thus applied to, said very frankly—

"I am quite of Adela's opinion, that the scheme is unnecessary and ill-judged. Besides, how are the two ladies to get back?—In a hired chaise? And without any servant?"

"No, no," cried her husband; "my groom shall attend them on horseback."

"Come, then, Adela," resumed Mrs.

Erington, "make no more fuss, but run up stairs, and get yourself ready. You are as circumspect and slow in your resolutions, as if the prosperity of an empire depended upon their wisdom."

Adela, much perplexed, looked at Mrs. Somerville for further assistance. Her secret inclination impelled her one way—her delicacy and diffidence urged her another—and finding that every body waited for her decision, she said—

"My dear Elinor, the whole morning will be consumed in debate, if you do not settle something for me. I will go, or stay, just as you advise."

"Well, then—I believe you must indulge the spoilt babies, and resolve upon accompanying them. But how is it possible, Alicia, that you can so vehemently have set your heart upon this useless excursion?"

"I shall not pretend," said Mrs. Erington, laughing, "to ascribe my eagerness solely to sensibility for Lord Ossely's distress; yet, I really *am* sorry for him, too. But the weather is so beautiful, that as one of Mr. Somerville's horses is lame, I am

glad to avail myself of this opportunity to obtain a morning drive."

She then, exulting at the success of her perseverance, flew to prepare for their departure, and, in a very few minutes, returning, arm in arm with the still half-reluctant Adela, Lord Ennerdale attended them to his travelling coach, and the youthful party drove away.

CHAP. III.

ENCOUNTERS.

ADELA placed her affectionate little friend on her lap, and anxious to avert the renewal of his grief when the inevitable moment of separation should arrive, cheered him with assurances, in a low voice, that at the end of six weeks or two months they should meet again. She promised to write him a long letter, which Mrs. Blandford, the lady to whom he was going, would have the good nature to read to him—

"And in it," continued she, "I will tell you every thing that we are doing, and every affectionate thought, that when I am

alone, comes into my head about you. And, besides, I will try and recollect some of Lady Harriet's merry little sayings; and when you hear all this read, you will fancy yourself amongst us. Shall you like such a letter, my Algernon?"

"Oh, yes, yes," cried he, with sparkling eyes, "I shall like it better than any thing in the world! And you won't mind whether I am good or naughty? You'll send it all the same, won't you?"

Adela smiled at this provident enquiry, and said—

"You don't mean, I hope, my dear Algernon, to be naughty?"

"No," said he, after a moment's hesitation, "I don't *mean* it, now; but perhaps, I mayn't be able to help it sometimes, and Mrs. Somerville never would promise me any thing, unless I told her that I would be quite, quite good."

"I believe she was very right, Algernon; but as I am only your playfellow, you know, I do not pretend to be so good a judge as my sister, of the properest times to indulge you."

Lord Ennerdale was seated opposite to

them, and though often disturbed in his wish to listen to their dialogue, by the ceaseless loquacity of Mrs. Erington, attended with much delight to all that she would allow him to hear of it. Algernon, thus lured by degrees, to forget his cares, had placed his interesting little face at the window, and was calling upon Adela to observe the different objects that were passing, when the carriage stopped at a turnpike, and, in a gentleman who rode up to it at the same instant, they all distinguished Julius Cleveland. He, too, saw, and was not slow in recognizing them. The arms on the coach pannel informed him immediately whose it was, and the appearance of his two sisters within it, accompanied by its owner, produced a revulsion in his blood, that flushed his face with the deepest crimson. He betrayed no voluntary sign, however, of having any knowledge of their persons, but after a cold and haughty survey of the whole party, put spurs to his horse, and galloped towards town.

"There's a bright pattern of fraternal courtesy for you!" exclaimed Mrs. Erington, having angrily for some moments looked

after him—" this is but the second glance I have had of him since I came to town, and a most satisfactory one it has been! He never approaches my brother-in-law's door; and once, when I called upon him in Hertford Street, he was either out, or chose to be denied. Does he mean, I wonder, absolutely to break with us all? Poor simple boy! Where does he expect to meet with more submissive observers of his perpetual whims?"

Adela, who saw traces of indignation in Lord Ennerdale's countenance, pressed her foot upon Mrs. Erington's, and directed towards her a look enjoining silence, too significant to be misunderstood, though too momentary to be observed by their companion. The incautious Alicia, unwillingly suffered herself to be checked, and Julius was no more mentioned.

But Adela was destined, during this short excursion, so wholly uninstigated by herself, to encounter every individual whom she least wished, in her present situation, to behold.

At the distance of about four miles from town, the carriage which she was in, was

met by an open barouche, containing a party of ladies, whom, on a nearer approach, she discovered to be Mrs. Cleveland and her two daughters. The astonished trio, manifested at the first glance, that they knew her, by the eagerness with which they stared in at the window, and by the perseverance with which, after they had passed, they were remarked by Mrs. Erington, to be looking after them—

"We shall have the credit, Lord Ennerdale," said she, "since this is the great northern road, of being reported to have engaged with you on a little trip into Scotland.—No one is more likely to set such a rumour afloat than our busy little cousin Jemima. 'Tis pity that some part of the probability of the anecdote will be destroyed, by there being two ladies with you, instead of one. I fancy people seldom go to Gretna Green in a family party."

"But since you say," cried the Earl, "that we shall have all the credit of the adventure whether we prosecute it or not, suppose we continue our journey upon our present sociable plan, and at its termination,

cast lots to decide which of the two sisters will do me the honour to accept me."

"By the time we had discovered, 'how happy you could be with either,' and how perfectly impartial you meant to be, I suspect, that we should both beg to come back again as unshackled as we went!"

Lord Ennerdale had no time to answer this speech, for at that moment Mrs. Erington, casting her eyes towards the road, hastily exclaimed—

"There's Talbot Cleveland!" and without waiting to explain her purpose, she impetuously called to one of the servants who attended them, and bade him order the postillions to stop. They did so, and at the same instant, Talbot perceiving her, gave a similar direction to his own driver, and leaning forward, hailed her with the utmost appearance of satisfaction.

"I am delighted to see you," cried Mrs. Erington, "we are only going out of town for an hour or two, and perhaps we shall meet again in the course of the day. Come and dine at my sister Somerville's."

"You are very good, but I must find

out what they are all doing at my father's, before I can make any positive engagement. You speak, however, in a regal style perfectly unintelligible to me. Who have you with you to make up the number *we?* I descry, at present, only your fair self."

Mrs. Erington then drew back, and Adela, in her turn exhibiting her face at the window, very cordially addressed him, and expressed the pleasure which it gave her to see him—

"Am I not a most unfortunate fellow," cried Talbot, colouring with surprise and delight on beholding her, "thus to meet you proceeding in *one* direction, whilst I am obliged to proceed in *another?*"

"Adela," cried Mrs. Erington, a sudden thought darting into her imagination which she took no time to weigh or consider, "suppose we here bid Lord Ennerdale farewell, and go back to town under the protection of Talbot? Where is the use of proceeding quite to the end of the stage?"

Lord Ennerdale looked confounded at this proposal, but was utterly silent, awaiting in painful uncertainty the decision of Adela. The first sentence which she uttered, stung

him to the soul—it expressed, an almost unhesitating assent to Mrs. Erington's plan; and Talbot, who occupied his chaise quite alone, declared himself enchanted to receive them.

Little Algernon, meanwhile, too much surprised by the hurry and bustle of this premature separation, to feel it so acutely as perhaps he might have done a more deliberate parting, suffered Adela hastily, but tenderly, to embrace him, and then, in speechless consternation, saw her and her sister alight. His father, in whose face she felt too conscious to look up, gravely wished them a pleasant drive—waited to see them seated in Talbot's chaise, and bade his postillions go on.

To have been guilty towards Lord Ennerdale of any appearance of cavalier treatment, was so foreign to Adela's accustomed practice, that when removed to the new vehicle in which she was now to proceed, she could scarcely believe that an arrangement so abrupt, had been sanctioned by her consent. Yet, her successive *rencontres* with persons disposed to view every incident of her life, in which Lord Ennerdale was at all impli-

cated, through the medium of suspicion and prejudice; a degree of youthful impatience at the uneasiness which she had endured from the moment these persons had seen her; the intimacy and near relationship subsisting between herself and Talbot—these feelings and reasons all induced her to hope, that however capricious her sudden desertion might make her appear, there was in it nothing either very blameable, or much to be wondered at. Depressed, however, by doubts of the propriety of her hasty proceedings — half approving, and half condemning herself, she took scarcely any part in the conversation that was passing between her sister and Talbot; but absent and disturbed, sat painfully meditating upon the whole transaction.

Mrs. Somerville received the friendly party, on their arrival in Cumberland Place, with the utmost cheerfulness, and seemed much pleased at the opportune meeting with Talbot which had exempted her lovely sisters from the necessity of returning to town alone. She seconded the invitation to dinner which Mrs. Erington had given him; and Talbot, unable to resist her frank cor-

diality, no longer hesitated to accept it, but ran home to see his father and mother, and promised to return, whatever other engagement might have been made for him.

Adela impatiently sought an opportunity, throughout the whole day, of conversing with him unreservedly upon the subject of Lady Rosalvan. Talbot appeared not, however, so desirous to gratify her in this particular as she either wished or had expected. His answers to all her enquiries, were vague and general. The only positive information which he chose to give her, was, that her mother was perfectly well, and that he had safely delivered the letter to her with which he had been entrusted. Why she had sent to that letter no answer, and what had passed at his interview with her, he was obviously unwilling to detail.

Sighing, and disappointed, Adela left him, resolved, however, on some future occasion, to return to the charge, and to insist upon knowing the utmost extent of the evil, whatever it was, which he had to communicate.

Lord Ennerdale was absent from town about a week, in the course of which Mrs. Errington, who, notwithstanding all her

flightiness, was by no means divested of attention to her own interest, had succeeded in making Adela the unsuspicious instrument of a confused and most extraordinary sort of project afloat in her brain, to supplant, in the heart of Sir Patrick Harley, this thankless object of his present veneration. She saw clearly that Adela utterly disregarded him—and still more so, in reality did she! But not like her, did she disregard his fortune. A handsome wife to match with a magnificent habitation, and a most sumptuous establishment, was what she continually heard he was solicitously in search of. She was as handsome as her insensible sister, very little older, and a great deal better versed in that sort of wisdom, which is requisite to compass a selfish design. Concluding that the Baronet had only waited to declare himself to Adela, till he perceived in her some symptoms of a disposition to hear him with favour, Mrs. Erington determined, that if flattery could avail, to *her* he should openly proclaim that passion, which, to her sister, had hitherto been only silently professed.

The return, at this time of Talbot Cleve-

land to London, was a favourable circumstance for the furtherance of her views. He was as frequent a visitor in Cumberland Place as the assiduous, though laconic Sir Patrick. She knew herself not to be the principal magnet of attraction to either—but Talbot was, in Adela's estimation, so unequivocally preferable to the Baronet, that during every accidental absence from the room of Mrs. Somerville, the task fell upon the fair widow of exerting herself for Sir Patrick's entertainment. Though he was considerably vapoured at sight, so continually, of a young and agreeable visitor seated beside the lady of his affection, yet, the recollection of their near affinity, somewhat reconciled him to the circumstance; and he was well content, whilst complacently engaged in contemplating the beauty of Adela, to benefit by the attentive politeness of her sister.

When rallied on her patient endurance of so unamusing a personage, Alicia, with a very good grace, laughed it off, and declared that she was plying the Baronet with compliments, in order to obtain from him the confirmation of a painfully-extorted promise to give a ball.

It happened one morning, that at Sir Patrick's usual hour of paying his now almost diurnal visit, Mrs. Somerville and Adela were both absent from home. On hearing however, that Mrs. Erington was within, he solemnly paced up stairs to enquire what was her plan and Miss Cleveland's for the evening.

"The old plan, Sir Patrick—we go to the Opera. Shall you be there?"

He answered in the affirmative; and then asked, whither her two sisters were gone.

"To see a picture upon sale at an auction room. Mr. Annesley said so much about it yesterday, that he raised their curiosity, and he has now escorted them to view it himself for the third or fourth time."

Sir Patrick made some further enquiries relative to this admired picture, and then, with an air of conscious satisfaction, said—

"I yesterday became its purchaser, and it was sent home this very morning."

"How very cruel of you Sir Patrick to complete the bargain before my sisters had seen it!—But was it not an immense price?"

He mentioned the sum, which was in fact enormous, but coolly added—

"I have one or two which cost me more."

"How much Adela would delight in viewing your collection!—If you had any gallantry, dear Sir Patrick, you would give a breakfast some morning, and invite her to it, to make her amends for having possessed yourself of this picture at the very time that she took the trouble of vainly going to see it."

"I should be too happy," answered he, much flattered by this suggestion, "if you and your sisters would so highly honour me."

"Oh, I will be answerable for their acquiescence, and, therefore, let it be considered from this moment, as a settled thing. But do not tell Adela that I first started the idea; your politeness, you know, would lose half its merit; and, besides,—she would think it a mere joke, and refuse the invitation."—

Sir Patrick, thanking her for the hint, promised discretion, and then his dexterous counsellor added:

"But do, at once, fix some day for this scheme. We are dying to see your house!"

"Are you disengaged the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, perfectly; write us a note then, as soon as you return home, and as a motive for the invitation, say that you are desirous of hearing Miss Cleveland's opinion of your new purchase. I don't know whether she is much of a judge, but you are sensible, that all ladies are fond of a little flattery."

The baronet smiled at this novel remark; and authorizing Mrs. Erington to include any friend she chose in the invitation, he took his leave.

When Mrs. Somerville and Adela returned home, their fair sister told them that Sir Patrick had called during their absence, but totally abstained from any allusion to the subject of their short conference.

Adela, a little angrily, complained of the useless trouble which he had occasioned them—

"He has already," she cried, "obtained possession of the picture that we went to see; he monopolizes every thing that is costly and rare, for the paltry pride, I

verily believe, of out-bidding less opulent competitors."—

"If he would marry," said Mrs. Somerville, "the evil of this encroaching system would in some degree be remedied, since all the precious things which his huge house engulfs, would then be open to general inspection. They are now only visible to his male associates."—

Nothing more passed upon the subject, nor was Sir Patrick, his house, or his collection again thought of till the projected invitation arrived.

Adela, the instant that she heard it read, declared her intention not to accept it.—

"Pshaw, nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Erington, "what should prevent your accepting it? Are you afraid of forfeiting your reputation by entering the house of a bachelor, in company with your two sisters?"

"Oh, as to my going," cried Mrs. Somerville, "that is entirely out of the question. I should equally dislike the fuss, the form, and the fatigue of the thing."—

"Why did you tell him, my dear Ali-

cia," said Adela, "that I ever had any wish to see his new picture?"

"He asked whither you and Elinor were gone? I could imagine no sort of reason for concealing from him the truth, and this invitation seems to be its natural consequence. Upon my word, Adela, if you persist in your refusal, I shall think you either very prudish, or positively ill-natured. I have an amazing inclination to see his fine house; yet, if both you and Elinor decline accompanying me, how can I possibly go and breakfast with him alone? Come," added she, looking round at Mr. and Mrs. Somerville, and Talbot, who happened to be present, "let us call a cabinet council, and confer upon this matter gravely and deliberately. You, Elinor, shall give the first opinion."—

"In that case, I shall say, that if Adela has no wish to go, it would be kind not to press her."—

"But would there be the smallest impropriety in her going?"

"Possibly not—but"....

"Oh, no *buts*! Pass we on now to our male counsellors.—What say you, Talbot?"

"I would echo the very words of Mrs. Somerville."—

"Then you might just as well be completely mute: an echo, you know, never has any meaning. I hate such nugatory speakers! Is it your intention, Mr. Somerville, to class amongst them? If it is—nod, or hold up your hand; but waste not your breath upon words which, after all, will only be sounds without sense."—

"You are marvellously flippant, my fair sister!" cried Mr. Somerville, "however, on the present occasion, I am willing to lean towards your side of the question. My dear Adela," continued he, "in declining Sir Patrick's invitation, you are your own enemy. I assure you, that the sight of his mansion will afford you great entertainment; and though, on his account, I am perfectly indifferent whether you go or not, yet, on your own, I am anxious that you should not throw away such an opportunity of being amused."

"Or of obliging her sister, you should haveadded," cried Mrs. Erington, laughing—"but Adela, I will persecute you no longer. If you can prevail upon yourself to go with-

out great reluctance, I should be delighted; but an extorted compliance would give me nothing but pain."—

This conversation, and others, subsequent to it, at length conquered Adela's resistance, though not her secret disinclination to the scheme—and she accompanied her sister and Mrs. Ross, whom they invited to be of the party, to the house of Sir Patrick Harley. Mr. Somerville and Talbot Cleveland attended them.

The preparations which the Baronet had made for their reception, were elegant and tasteful, at once evincing the high sense he had of the honour they conferred upon him, and the only species of judgment which he possessed. As master of the revels to a magnificent and voluptuous Prince, he would have shone unrivalled. The sort of cares attached to setting forth a banquet or adorning a saloon for festivity, seemed to be his natural vocation; and so serious was the importance which he connected with these offices, that, like the famous martyr to false honour, *Vatel*, steward to the great *Condé*, it is scarcely to be doubted, he would have deemed the delay of an expected dish of fish

for the King's dinner, a disgrace which nothing but his blood could wipe out.*

Adela, who, as it has been said, had set forward on this party with unaffected, though silent, since unavailing reluctance, was out of spirits the whole morning. Talbot alone seemed to participate in her feelings. A cloud, however light, however transient upon that brow which he had hitherto been accustomed to behold beaming with the serenest sun-shine, dejected and perturbed him. He hovered incessantly round her; and once whilst she was standing at a window, detached from the rest of the group, and indifferent to the display of all Sir Patrick's costly acquisitions, he stole towards her, and ventured gently to enquire the cause of her obvious disquiet.

Adela affected to deny the charge, and in truth, her meditations were not of a nature which she could very readily have explained. She was reflecting upon the strange appearance this unnecessary and somewhat

* This wretched man ran a sword through his body in despair at the above disappointment. Louis the XIV. was the monarch for whom the repast was preparing. Ten minutes after Vatel expired, the fish arrived.

questionable visit would have in the eyes of Lord Ennerdale, should it ever become known to him; she was lamenting the encouragement it was calculated to give to Sir Patrick's hopes, and sincerely regretting likewise, that in defiance of her utmost endeavours to escape distinction, the Baronet would persist in considering her as the principal personage present. Mrs. Erington, it is true, relieved her by her own civility to him, from the pain of being often forced into conversation; yet, she observed, that his eyes followed her in all directions; and whatever compliments were paid to his statues, his pictures, his carvings, his gildings, or his Mosaics, he seemed restless and unsatisfied, till Adela's faint commendations, or Adela's compelled smile, confirmed, and gave value to the flattering encomiums of her companions.

This solicitude for her particular applause soon drew him to the window near which she and Talbot were conversing. On his approach, the young man rejoined Mrs. Ross and Alicia: but Sir Patrick, supplied with more than usual eloquence (courage was not what he had ever been so deficient in as ap-

propriate words to express his meaning); elated by her presence beneath his princely roof, and secretly confiding in the influence which such an exhibition of wealth and magnificence could not fail to procure their possessor—Sir Patrick seizing the favourable moment, and smiling in her face with all the expression which his visage could assume, suddenly said—

"I have been thinking, for some time past, charming Miss Cleveland, that there is now but one thing which this house greatly requires. Can you guess what I mean?"

"It is not easy to think of any deficiency, Sir Patrick, in the midst of so profuse a display of every luxury and convenience."

"But these are inanimate and uninteresting possessions, compared to the remaining blessing left for me to covet! Surely, you must agree with me, that such a habitation merits and demands a—mistress!"

The enamoured baronet put so much emphasis upon these last words, and wore an air so extremely significant, that Adela, blushing, and distressed how to answer him, cast her eyes in every direction but that

which exposed her to encounter his. A carriage was approaching at the moment—she mechanically glanced a look towards it, and the countenance which met her view from its window, substituted in her cheek the paleness of vexation for the crimson of embarrassment. It was Lord Ennerdale whom she beheld, just arrived in town, and now driving to his own door, nearly opposite to the house of Sir Patrick Harley.

As he was alighting, Mr. Somerville, unsuspicious of the nature of the baronet's conference with his sister, approached to ask what sort of vehicle had, with such rapidity been driving into the street?

Adela had no voice to utter a syllable; she wished herself away from the house, away from the spot where she stood, but she seemed spell-bound and unable to move. Sir Patrick, provoked at the interruption, turned sullenly from Mr. Somerville, and walked towards the two ladies in an adjoining room.

Meanwhile, Lord Ennerdale having descended from his carriage, was seen in a few moments approaching one of the drawing-room windows of his own house, with

no other design, as it first appeared, than that of taking a survey of the weather. But his eyes, ere long, wandered to the mansion of Sir Patrick; and Adela, then, with ill-timed quickness, retreated. Mr. Somerville however, kept his post, and smiled and nodded with an air of real satisfaction at the earl's return. His greetings were answered with no corresponding looks of cheerfulness; Lord Ennerdale had never worn an aspect so cold and distant since Mr. Somerville had first known him. He remained but a very few minutes in sight, and did not again render himself visible whilst Adela's irksome visit lasted.

CHAP. IV.

ABRUPTNESS.

It was now the fixed determination of Adela, to confide to Mrs. Somerville her suspicions of Sir Patrick's attachment, and to consult with her on the fittest measures to be pursued, in order to dissipate the unfounded hopes which the sudden civilities of that lady's husband might have contributed to excite.

But on arriving in Cumberland-Place, the first intelligence that awaited them, was, that Mrs. Somerville had been taken ill during their absence, though she had strictly ordered that no information of the circumstance should be communicated to her husband and sisters, whilst they were absent from home.

News of such a nature, it will easily be believed, drove from Adela's thoughts all remembrance of self, and left her sensible to nothing but the tenderest anxiety for the safety of a sister so justly beloved. The house was, of course, closed against visitors the whole day—a day which not only Adela, Mrs. Erington and their brother-in-law, but every member of the establishment passed in alternate hope and terror. The gentle and judicious Elinor, was adored by her dependents, for hers were virtues and endearing qualities so genuine and consistent, that, after diffusing animation and complacency throughout the brilliant circle of a drawing-room, she knew how to conciliate the love, mingled with respect, of the humblest of her domestics.

At length, the doubts, the fears, the agi-

tation that harassed every bosom, gave place to grateful delight. Mrs. Evington had the unspeakable pleasure of being the first to announce to Mr. Somerville and Adela, the birth of a little boy, and the safety of his mo her. The news spread rapidly through the household, and never was a collection of happier faces beheld. Mr. Somerville gave orders that a liberal testimony of his joy should be distributed amongst them; he embraced the tearful yet smiling Adela, —cut capers round the room with her more wildly delighted sister,—and, as a further solace to his overflowing heart, ran up into the nursery to communicate to his two little girls the birth of their young brother.

During the whole ensuing fortnight, Adela dedicated every hour to domestic engagements, and neither wished for, nor partook in any species of external gayety. Lord Ennerdale, with a solicitude almost fraternal, sent daily enquiries, and during the latter portion of this time, though Adela saw him not, being in her sister's room, he called repeatedly upon Mr. Somerville. Talbot Cleveland dined once, and occasionally spent the evening in Cumberland

Place: but no one else was admitted beyond the hall door. Mrs. Erington, though delighting in engagements abroad, detested the trouble of receiving formal visitors at home; and Adela forgot that such people as visitors existed.

Yet the restless Alicia, though perhaps not quite so much immersed in dissipation as usual, was far from being such a recluse as her more temperate sister. Her evenings were nearly all spent from home, and in the morning she amused Mrs. Somerville with details of what she had heard and seen, or indulged herself in the pleasure of affecting to laugh at Adela's faithful admirer, Sir Patrick Harley—

"He languishes," cried she, "to see you shine forth again, and talks to me of nothing else.—In return for the patience with which I prevail upon myself to hear him, I should not at all wonder, if the ball which I have been so long trying to make him give, should very speedily take place.—By the way, Adela, talking of balls—won't you go to Lady Isabella Annesley's?"

"When is it?"

"I wonder whether you have really forgotten, or whether this question proceeds from missish affectation! You have no idea how suspicious it sounds, nor how amazingly conscious you look, at this very moment, of your own duplicity!—Why the ball, my dear child, is next Thursday, and I advise you to go to it by all means. Elinor, by that time, will be almost able to dance herself, and I am sure she does not wish to shut you up any longer. I'll tell you what, Adela, if you stay at home drinking caudle, and stirring pap, till my sister's own confinement is over, people will swear that *you* have had a child too. And where will you find godfathers for both the brats? Elinor, you know, has engaged Lord Ennerdale for hers; so I believe that you must, for yours, make application to Sir Patriek Harley. Poor man, he would look a little astounded at such a solicitation from the correct Miss Cleveland! Yet, I dare say, the habit of ostentation is so inveterate in him, that he would make magnificent christening presents. But pray, would you give the poor baby its sponsor's

ugly name? And how, if it was a girl, could that matter be arranged? Would you call it *Patrica*?"

"Yes—and wish it no securer guardian of its virtue, than a face and manner as disagreeable as its godfather's!"

"Oh, poor dear Sir Patrick!—*I* thought him ugly once, but the view of his house, and of all the pretty valuables which it contains, has almost compelled me to recant the injurious opinion. A wooden idol, when thickly burnished over with gold, and placed in a gorgeous temple, attracts worshippers, whatever may be the deformity of its features, or the intrinsic worthlessness of its materials."

"Might it not be asked, without any great impropriety," said Adela, half smiling, "which, in such case, is the most respectable—the idol, or its worshipper?"

Mrs. Erington laughed, but said that she had no time to decide the question at that moment: and Adela, urged as much by her own wishes, as by the joint persuasion of both her sisters, determined to accept Lady Isabella's invitation.

The day preceding this pleasant engage-

ment, Julius, for the first time since Mrs. Somerville's confinement, paid a visit in Cumberland Place. His treatment of Adela was cold and ungracious: but to the two other ladies, he was somewhat more cordial.—On being reproached by them for so seldom shewing himself, he promised, unless his father, whom he now hourly expected, arrived that day in town, he would dine with them. None of the party knew till thus informed of it, that Mr. Cleveland was on his journey. The two elder sisters expressed much satisfaction at the news; but Adela, ever conscious, at that name, of a sensation of awe, said nothing;—yet would have given millions to have felt equally entitled to rejoice.

After waiting for Julius nearly an hour, the family had just assembled round the dinner-table, when he abruptly entered. He said, in excuse for his tardiness, that his father alighted in Hertford Street at the very instant that he was meditating to set out:—

"I would then," continued he, "have given up my conditional engagement; but the proposal was opposed, though my father

kept me so long to hear all the grievances which he had met with upon the road, that I began to think, as he had already dined himself, I should lose all chance of obtaining a meal any where."

Mr. Somerville and Alicia now earnestly enquired how the traveller looked, and what sort of spirits he appeared to be in.

"Oh, he looks as well as ever, for aught I see," cried Julius,—"not quite so youthful and handsome, perhaps, as his evergreen brother: but they both get a dip in Medea's cauldron once in seven years, and are the finest pair of beaux immortal, I ever beheld.—His spirits, I can say nothing about; they are as good as usual: but after all, they have never deserved the name, since I have known him. He talks, and listens, and moves about, and performs all the accustomed actions of a living man, save laughing! I cannot remember any occasion on which I ever heard him proceed to such an excess; and I am very certain, that with a little retrospective meditation, I could exactly specify the number of times that I have, in one and twenty years, seen him smile!"

"Your exuberant gayety," said Mr. Somerville, "probably overpowers him."

"I assure you, very honestly, that when he and I are *tête-à-tête*, I give him mighty little reason for that accusation!—I love my father—I have no fear of him—and yet, for the life and soul of me, I can never help sinking into vapourishness if I am left too long alone with him. He pretends to no wit himself, and certainly has not, in any degree, the faculty of causing it in others."

Julius accompanied Mr. Somerville into the drawing-room to tea, and spent the greatest part of the evening with his family. He said that he was going out of town in two days, but expected to be back in less than a week; and if Mr. Somerville was not already better provided, he begged that he might have the pleasure of standing godfather to his young nephew.

This offer considerably embarrassed Mr. Somerville, who was amply stored, in the persons of Lord Enverdale and Mr. Annesley, with sponsors for the new-born heir, and who yet felt almost equally reluctant either to refuse his brother-in-law, or to inform

him who were the friends by whom his request had been anticipated. However, he saw no means of avoiding the acknowledgment, and after many cordial thanks, sincerely explained the state of the case.

The countenance of Julius fell on receiving this intelligence, and he recovered not his good-humour the whole evening. Mr. Annesley, one of the nearest connections, and the most intimate friend of Lord Ennerdale, was almost as abhorrent to him as Lord Ennerdale himself: and both their names were hateful to his ears.

Actuated by none of the foresight of art, or the promptitude of habitual mystery, Adela had omitted to remove from observation the card of invitation which had been sent to her and Mrs. Errington by Lady Isabella. It lay upon the chimney, with two or three others, and Julius, in his progress round the room, mechanically taking up whatever struck his sight, espied and began reading this card.

No sooner were its contents ascertained, than flinging it disdainfully down, he snatched up a light, and said abruptly to Adela—

"I want to speak with you:—come into the next room."

Adela, though not much pleased at being summoned in so dry a tone of command, arose and followed him.

"Once more," said he, as soon as they were by themselves, "I will be fool enough to try my influence over your mind! Nothing can be less sanguine than my hopes of prevailing: but it may do some good to prepare you for what you have to expect, if you obstinately persist in refusing to listen to me. I see, amongst your other invitations, a card for a ball to-morrow, at the Annesleys. I suppose, you fully mean to go?"

"Yes, we do."

"Then, let me apprize you, that of all the engagements which, so immediately on my father's arrival, you *could* accept, I know of none that would so deeply and irreconcileably offend him!"

"And why, my dear Julius?"

"For this plain reason: that the Annesleys are connected with Ennerdale! Your extraordinary abode in Portman Square, he is probably unacquainted with; at least, *I* never communicated it to him; and it is unlikely that any one else should. But in

London, his own eye will be upon you. He mixes much in the world, when his health will permit it, and hears whatever passes in houses of fashion. This ball will be no secret to him, and through some channel or other, you may rest assured, that he will learn you were present at it. Are you perfectly indifferent to the impression which, at the very outset of his residence in London, such a report will produce upon his mind?"

"This is a cruel question, Julius, and implies a doubt which I have never provoked! You *know* that I have the greatest dread of doing any thing which might strengthen or confirm my father's aversion. But an action so immaterial as this,—an engagement, which, were they both in health, both my sisters would accept, I cannot see why it should be a so much greater trespass in me to accept likewise."

"You are less undiscerning where your secret inclinations are less interested! However, I have done,—if you chuse to go, take the consequence."

"Tell me what the consequence will be! Tell me why there is more impropriety in

seeing Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley at their own house, than in meeting them continually here?"

"Lady Isabella and Mr. Annesley!" repeated Julius, ironically;—"and why so affectedly studious to omit the name of Ennerdale—of your pre-determined partner, perhaps?"

"Indeed he is not! I have never seen him since the invitation arrived."

"Then, see him not to-morrow. Feed not his vanity by going in search of his society! When you meet him here, it may be supposed that you are a passive member of the family, intent neither upon alluring nor repulsing him. If you run in search of him amongst his own connections—if, forgetting or disregarding the disapprobation of your father and your brother, you force yourself upon his attention—what conclusions do you not give that father and brother a right to draw? Alicia must do as she pleases—she is impenetrable against remonstrance, and too jealous of her own independence to pay any regard to the wishes of her connections. Is that the case with you, Adela?"

"No, certainly!" replied she. And then, after a short silence, she added—"since you make so urgent a point of influencing me in this affair, I will, though with considerable regret, send an excuse to Lady Isabella. For the paltry consideration of a ball, more or less, it is hardly worth while, my dear Julius, to run the risk of a serious quarrel with you."

Julius, almost hopeless of success, was struck by the kindness of this answer, and gratified by the look of perfect good-humour with which it was uttered. He shook her by the hand; called her a dear girl, and returned with her into the front room, highly pleased at the termination of their conference.

When it was known, the next day, that Adela had abandoned all intention of going in the evening to Portman Square, both her sisters attributed the change in her purpose to the interference of Julius, and blamed her unsparingly for her too great facility. She neither acknowledged nor denied the charge, but adhered immoveably to her present decision—and endeavoured also to adhere to it without internal murmuring. Yet some

strength of mind was necessary to accomplish this. There were individuals who would be present at this ball, whom she earnestly wished to see; she was fond of dancing; at Mr. Annesley's, she was almost assured of being engaged by such partners as she most highly approved, and a longer intermission than usual in her amusements, would have given a double zest to the expected gayety of the evening. But it was not to be—and afraid of trusting herself to too much meditation, she determined not to spend a moment of the day either in solitude or inactivity.

When Mrs. Erington was ready to set out, finding that she could not, quite so philosophically as she had hoped, bear to see her in her ball attire, Adela devised some pretext to avoid entering the drawing-room till after her departure.

Talbot Cleveland had dined that day in Cumberland Place, and not being amongst the number of those who were invited to the ball, Mrs. Somerville asked him to spend an hour or two quietly with her and Adela in the dressing-room.

He accepted the proposal with pleasure;

but afraid of fatiguing his friendly hostess, would have departed early. Mrs. Somerville, finding that he had no other engagement, opposed the design, and said—

"Since you are so apprehensive of being a trespasser in this apartment, Adela shall go down with you into the drawing-room, and give you a little music, or at least find entertainment for you till the hour arrives at which you would take leave, if Mr. Somerville and Alicia were at home."

She then shook hands with him, and he followed Adela down stairs.

"I am extremely glad," said she, declining the seat which he would have placed for her at the instrument, "that this opportunity is afforded me of speaking to you without fear of interruption. Elinor knows, that I have particularly wished to question you in private, ever since your return from Scotland. The information I drew from you some time ago, has by no means satisfied me. I want to hear much more about my poor mother than merely that she is well. Discard all mystery then, my dear cousin, and tell me, plainly and unreserved-

ly, every thing that you know relating to her."

Talbot had nothing pleasant to add to the information which he had already given her, and wished exceedingly to escape the necessity of furnishing her with further intelligence.

"Are you not," said he, "a little unreasonable in your expectations?—What additional accounts can you hope to obtain from one who was only indulged by Lady Rosalyan with a five minutes audience, and even during that short time could not speak to her except in the presence of a third person?"

"I am prepared," said Adela, alarmed at his evasive manner, "for something painful. Your looks and guarded language, assure me that you know more than you are willing to wound my feelings by disclosing. But dismiss these friendly, perhaps, but now, suspicious precautions, and confess to me the simple and unvarnished truth."

Thus urged, young Cleveland gathered more courage—

"Your mother, my dear cousin," cried

he, "has, I fear, delivered herself up to evil and to selfish counsellors, and when I reached Pine Lodge, was on the point of putting the seal to her own future misery!"

Adela turned pale, and sat down; but without withdrawing her eyes from his face, she awaited in silent dismay a fuller explanation.

Talbot, with evident reluctance thus went on—

"Her house has long been beset, and her ear exclusively engrossed by a confederacy of the vilest parasites—the most designing, and, I suspect, necessitous hangers-on. The principal of these, a Mrs. Cameron, raised from indigence and vulgarity, by a marriage of which she was every way unworthy, to a station of comparative respectability, has a brother, a complete adventurer, who, after trying a variety of means, none very creditable, to shake off poverty and insignificance, at last had recourse to the double occupation, or rather drudgery, of an author, and a strolling player. This man, though no longer young, is reported, for I have not seen him, to possess considerable advantages of face and person—in short,

aided by the machinations of his treacherous sister, what will you say, my dearest Adela, when I tell you that he has won your mother's regard—and obtained her hand?"

Adela, profoundly grieved, but scarcely experiencing a moment's surprise, sorrowfully cast up her eyes, and said—

"I feared as much!"

"Had you, then, ever heard of his existence before?"

"I heard of it," answered she, "with the most fearful anticipations, whilst I was still at Pine Lodge, and was long tormented with vague conjectures of his sister's purpose, after I came to town. A letter, which I ought to have received much sooner, but which only reached me a short time before your return, gave me but too great reason to fear that my mother would surrender herself an unresisting prey to the avarice of these worthless schemers. The letter to which I allude, was written by my mother's maid; who, after detailing to me the machinations carrying on by Mrs. Cameron, exhorted me, in the strongest manner, to endeavour to counteract them, by addressing, without delay, the most earnest re-

monstrance in my power, to her deluded lady."—

"And did you?" enquired Talbot.—

"Yes, but with all proper deference—and with very little hope, if any, of producing conviction."—

"As affairs have now turned out," resumed Talbot, "I am heartily sorry that you ever wrote at all. I heard, but without giving credit to the assertion, or being able to comprehend upon what grounds it rested, that Norris, poor Lady Rosalvan's successful suitor, had declared himself your irreconcileable enemy. There can now be very little doubt, that your mother shewed him your letter; and thence the resentment he so insolently avows!"—

"I can only hope," said Adela, "that an enmity against which I am so happily protected, will not recoil upon his melancholy dupe. What conduct does he observe towards her, and what are the prospects she retains for her future life?"

"I have little to state," cried young Cleveland, "on either of these points, that will give you any comfort. This rash marriage has connected Lady Rosalvan with a

whole group of harpies, unfeeling, unprincipled, and systematically bent upon bereaving her of every shadow of independence. Mrs. Cameron, and her mother-in-law, have taken up their permanent abode at Pine Lodge, and suffer its, now, merely nominal mistress, to admit the approach of no human being till after they have ascertained the object of the visit. The five thousand pounds which it is well known that she has to bequeath at her decease, and the present advantages which they derive from the participation of her alloted income, seem to be the chief motives of this suspicious vigilance. But another reason for it, doubtless is, the shameless insolence of their own conduct to their devoted victim. They have dismissed all her favourite domestics, and substituted others entirely new, and more subservient to their interest. It cannot be said that they riot on her spoils, since such is their industry to accumulate by immediate savings every thing which they can for an uncertain hereafter, that they have fawned or frowned her into an immediate resolution of parting with her horses and carriage—of shutting up all the

best part of the house—and of living, when Norris is absent, with a parsimony so sordid, that it nearly excludes the commonest comforts of life. The person from whom I received all this distressing information, is the poor discarded Mrs. Temple. On hearing that my name was Cleveland, she sought me out at the miserable little inn, where, in hopes of obtaining a second and more satisfactory interview with Lady Rosalvan, I prevailed upon myself to remain during two days. Her heart was full, and it seemed a relief to her to find some one willing to listen to her just regrets, and to hear her heavy catalogue of unmerited injuries."—

"Alas! poor Mrs. Temple!" interrupted Adela, sincerely grieved for her, "after a faithful servitude of nearly twenty years, she was, indeed, entitled to a better recompence!"

"She is now," resumed Talbot, "turned adrift, with no other remuneration than the bare payment of her wages, and no better prospect than that, advanced as she already is in years, of resuming a life of dependence in some other family. Indignant as she is, however, she had the justice to acknowledge

that of all the wretches who now surround your infatuated mother, Norris, undeserving as he is, seems the least grasping and the least detestable. He has not, hitherto, treated Lady Rosalvan with open contumely, nor aggravated to her by his own arrogance the tyranny of his female associates. But he is seldom at home, and the dissolute companions whom he introduces into the house whenever he enters it, shock your mother as much as his long and frequent journeys surprise and alarm her. Such, my dear cousin, is the painful history which I brought from Scotland, and had determined to keep lodged within my own breast. You have now drawn it from me—but to what other purpose than to afflict your own heart?"

"And what right have I," said Adela, weeping at this gloomy picture of her mother's fate, "to expect that affliction will for ever spare me?—I think not of myself, however, at the present moment. Tenfold is the sorrow that I would endure to contribute to the emancipation of the unhappy Lady Rosalvan from her hopeless and degrading bondage!"

At this moment the drawing-room door

flew open, and the voice of Mr. Somerville was heard, saying—

"Go in there till I come down to you."

Adela and her companion turned their heads, and in the person thus ushered in, beheld Lord Ennerdale.

It would be difficult to decide which individual present looked at that moment the least gratified at sight of the other.

Lord Ennerdale casting towards Talbot, a glance compounded of anger, astonishment, and the deepest mortification, remained fixed upon one spot near the open door, too indignant to speak—too much confounded to move. Adela, hastily drying her tears, attempted to rise, but agitated, and half terrified at the Earl's unwonted hostility of countenance, her limbs trembled under her, and pale as marble, she was forced to keep her seat.

Talbot alone preserved any tolerable composure. Yet, offended by the haughty air with which he had been regarded; convinced that in Lord Ennerdale he beheld a jealous lover, and no less inclined to hate him in that character, than to envy the supposed influence which he possessed, Tal-

bot eyed him with reciprocal resentment, and deigned not to utter a syllable, or to stir from his place.

At length the Earl, with lips that quivered as he spoke, and cheeks that glowed with ill-suppressed emotion, addressing himself to Adela, said—

"I beg your pardon for this intrusion—Mr. Somerville led me hither—he knew not that you were engaged."

And then, slightly bowing, he precipitately retreated—flew down the stairs, and was out of the house in an instant.

Adela, on hearing the street door close after him, threw herself back in her chair, and covering her face with her handkerchief, gave to the dejected Talbot every reason to suspect, that she was again, and with increased bitterness, shedding tears.

Mr. Somerville now came eagerly running down from his wife's apartment.

At sight of young Cleveland alone with Adela, he started—

"Where," cried he, "is Ennerdale?"

"Gone," laconically answered Talbot.

"Gone?—and wherefore did he go?"

"Perhaps, to cool himself by a walk!"—

"Why, what has been the matter?—What has passed?—Tell me, Talbot, and tell me how it chances, that you and Adela should be shut up here talking by yourselves at such an odd time of the evening?"

"You must give me leave to say, Mr. Somerville, that you have stated your question in very extraordinary terms!" cried Talbot, with some heat.

"I have stated it very intelligibly, at least, Mr. Cleveland! And it would be a great satisfaction to me if you would condescend to let your answer be equally explicit!"

"Must I then apologize for a conference of your wife's proposing? Must I remind you, that as Adela's near relation, it is possible I may have had occasion to speak to her upon family affairs, which she might be unwilling to discuss before any third person?"

The petulant, but candid Somerville, now smoothed his brow, and resuming his accustomed good-humour, answered—

"I believe I have been copying too closely the example of our testy friend Julius!—But, my dear Talbot, you must forgive me, and remember, that when a man is conscious

he has done a foolish thing, it is some consolation to him to quarrel with the first person, friend or foe, whom he finds in his way. I had no business to send Ennerdale in here so abruptly, and I am heartily sorry also, to have been betrayed into any thing like intemperance of language to you, who are one of the last individuals whom, either on your own account, or my wife's, I would wish to offend."

A concession not half so ample would have sufficed to appease Talbot, who, though not inaccessible to moody passions, was easy to conciliate, and ever more disposed to forgive the faults of others than his own. He now frankly shook Mr. Somerville by the hand, at the same time, bidding him good night. And then, whispering to the still motionless Adela, an affectionate "Heaven bless you!" he quitted the room, and immediately after, the house.

As soon as he was gone, Mr. Somerville took possession of the chair which he had just vacated, and would have entered with his sister-in-law into an explanatory conversation: but slowly raising her head, Adela, half impatiently, half in sorrow, answered—

"Do not talk to me, my dear Mr. Somerville, to-night; I am sick at heart—sick of myself, of the world, and all that it contains!"

She arose as she pronounced these words, and leaving Mr. Somerville utterly confounded at her singular language and manner, retired to her room.

CHAP. V.

VICISSITUDE.

Lord Ennerdale, devoured with jealousy, disappointment, and the keenest regret, had quitted the house of Mr. Somerville in a state of mind too cruelly disturbed, to venture immediately on a re-appearance amidst the gay throng at Lady Isabella's. He paraded a considerable time through the adjacent streets, his thoughts all in tumult, his resolutions all unfixed—

"Why was she thus privately conferring with Talbot at a time, when indisposition was made the plea for her not appearing at my sister's? Why was she weeping? Why was she so evidently confused by my un-

expected entrance? — Has he then really touched her heart? And must I thus submit, to lose her? No—by all that I most prize, under Heaven, I will not so passively renounce her!—An undeserved, an unworthy suspicion of her purpose to encourage Harley has influenced me to stand aloof too long. I seem now to be suffering the just penalty of my infatuated silence! To-morrow shall rescue me from a state of such intolerable suspense. I will enter into open competition with this dreaded Cleveland; I will tell her how unspeakably dear she is to my heart, and how utterly incapable I feel of resigning her patiently to a rival. Adela is too noble minded to waver in her choice from any worldly motive;—she will deal with me honourably and frankly;—when assured of the passion which she has inspired, she will at once confess, that she has no heart left to bestow—or she will smile encouragement upon my happiest hopes!"—

Thus determining to rest his cause on the issue of the next day's avowal, he gradually became calmer; the throbbings of his agitated bosom subsided, and, retracing his

steps to Mr. Annesley's, he again entered the ball-room with looks nearly as unruffled as the most unimpassioned man present.

To the incautious rattle of Mrs. Erington the untoward events of the night were to be attributed. Instantly on her entrance at Lady Isabella's, accompanied only by Mr. Somerville, she had been accosted by Lord Ennerdale for the purpose of enquiring after her sister. The long interval which had elapsed since he and Adela had met, gave double fervency to his wish of seeing her that night. He had almost forgotten the painful surprise which her visit at Sir Patrick's had occasioned him; he had almost forgiven her abrupt desertion the day that Talbot met them upon the road; he thought of nothing but the joy of again beholding, and the delight of again conversing with her.

To his eager interrogations, Mrs. Erington carelessly, and almost laughingly, answered—

"Oh, she has got a head-ache and a cold, and I am commissioned to make speeches for her to Lady Isabella."

"If we may judge by your countenance,"

said the disappointed Ennerdale, "she is no very severe sufferer from either of these causes!"

"Now, pray don't watch my countenance when I merely repeat what other people bid me say. Remember that I am only answerable for what I assert of myself."

Turning to Mr. Somerville, Lord Ennerdale now gravely said—

"Can you at all conjecture what induced your sister, if not really ill, thus severely to disappoint us?"

Mr. Somerville was beginning a warm protestation of his entire ignorance upon the subject, when he was interrupted by the approach of Mr. Annesley—

"What have you done with the fair Adela?" cried he—

"Call her likewise the faithless Adela!" cried his brother-in-law—"she means to defraud us of her presence."

"Is not she then coming at all?"

Mrs. Erington shook her head and shrugged—

"But what is her pretext? What excuse does she send?"

"She pleads a cold and a head-ache."

"Neither of which you believe to be real?"

Mrs. Erington smiled, and again most significantly shrugged—"This being the case," resumed Mr. Annesley, "I insist upon it, Somerville, that you go back to her with our protest against so inhuman a caprice. Here comes Lady Isabella, who, I am sure, will second the resolution."

Her ladyship, on hearing the affair stated, readily voted for Mr. Somerville's instant departure on his embassy.

"Oh, she won't come, you may rest perfectly assured!" cried Mrs. Erington—"If all my teasing had no effect, I defy Mr. Somerville's eloquence to shake her stubborn purpose. However, he may try.—And *should* you succeed," added she, turning to her brother, "tell her, that when she arrives, I will go down and bring her into the ball-room."

Mr. Annesley now whispered to Lord Emnerdale—

"Somerville sets out on this diplomatic negociation, totally unprovided with credentials: why do you not go with him, to vouch for the power to treat with which we have invested him?"

Lord Ennerdale coloured, hesitated a moment, and then, darting off, overtook Mr. Somerville on the stairs—

"If you think," cried he, "that your sister will see me, I should like to accompany you, and hear from her own lips the reasons she gives for breaking her engagement."

"She will see you," said Mr. Somerville, "there can be no doubt; but that she will favour you with any better reasons than she has already assigned to us, I will not with equal readiness, pretend to promise."

On the arrival of the two gentlemen at Mr. Somerville's door, some of the men servants were standing upon the steps, talking with a group of domestics belonging to the adjoining house. They made way for their master and his friend, who thus gained admittance without the necessity of knocking.

Believing that Adela was, as usual, in his wife's apartment, Mr. Somerville ushered Lord Ennerdale into the drawing-room in the hasty manner which has been related, and then proceeded to seek and bring her down.

But what pain, what disturbance had this

introduction occasioned to the artless, but apparently designing Adela! She had declined a gay and tempting engagement, even with effort to her own feelings, from respect to what she was told would be her father's wishes; she had exchanged for this exhilarating scene an afflicting conference on family affairs; she had risked offending the Annesleys, had provoked her brother-in-law, and called forth the censure of both her sisters—and all to what purpose?

"To none," cried she, "which I can ever reflect upon without the keenest regret. What conclusion can be drawn from my being surprised in a conversation so strangely-timed and so earnest with Talbot, but this—that our interview was preconcerted, and that, on a false plea of indisposition, I gave up the ball wholly on his account?"

These reflections, and the melancholy impression left upon her mind by the tale which she had heard of her unhappy mother, deprived her of refreshing sleep during the night, and sent her in the morning, with harassed feelings, and eyes that betrayed the unsoundness of her rest, to the breakfast table of her sister.

The moment Mrs. Somerville beheld her—

"My dearest Adela," cried she, affectionately extending her hand, "what is the matter? Is the disquiet, the sadness, I might almost say, that is visible in your countenance, the effect of your last night's conference with our cousin?"

"Not entirely, dear Elinor; some personal chagrin mingles with the deep concern excited by his representation of my poor mother's comfortless state. I will explain to you my meaning; but let me entreat, that what I have to say may never be mentioned before Alicia,—and, as all remonstrance would now be useless, forbear likewise to enter into any discussion of the subject with Mr. Somerville."

She then, abridging and qualifying the recital as much as was consistent with veracity, communicated to Mrs. Somerville her mother's ill-advised and most ill-boding marriage;—and, afterwards, spoke feelingly, but without asperity, of the awkward introduction of Lord Ennerdale into the drawing-room, in the midst of her confidential dialogue with young Cleveland.

"I participate, most sincerely," cried

Mrs. Somerville, when she had heard her to an end, "in the concern this affair must give you: perhaps, dear Adela, I even regret it more deeply than yourself."

The entrance of Mr. Somerville at that moment, withheld his wife from pursuing the conversation.

"My good little sister," cried he, "what sort of cue are you in this morning? You played off such strange heroics last night, that I knew not what to make of you! Are you come down from these altitudes? And will you listen to, and answer a plain English question?"

"Yes," said Adela, "if I like its matter and its manner!"

"I am glad to see that saucy smile,—you now look like yourself again. Well, then—will you condescend to tell me, why you drove poor Ennerdale away in such a furious hurry, and why you were breaking your heart so deplorably in company with Talbot Cleveland?"

"Lord Ennerdale drove *himself* away; nothing was said, nothing was done to make him depart with so much speed. But, in

my turn, pray allow me to ask, what motive induced him to come?"

"Your mad sister betrayed to him that your illness was all a mere feint, and he accompanied me hither with a slight hope of prevailing upon you to retract your resolution of staying at home."

"He cannot complain that I was inexorable to his pleadings—for the fact is, he never pleaded at all!"

"Why, what could he think of the dolorous state in which he found you, and of the sort of mystery that seemed attached to the conversation in which you were engaged? I hardly knew what I was to believe myself."

"Believe simply this, my dear brother—that Talbot was announcing to me some very distressing tidings, which, though I am fully disposed to confide to you, I must entreat that you will let me refer you to Elinor to explain some other time. I have told the story once this morning, and it grieves me too much, to be very willing to repeat it."

Mr. Somerville, much concerned, now affectionately said—

"You should know of grief nothing but

the name, my dear Adela, if I could influence your fate. I cannot reconcile myself to the appearance of the slightest dejection upon your kind and open brow! But come, let us talk of other things: there will be hours enough in the course of the day, to hear from Elinor the unwelcome particulars which you teach me to expect."

Mrs. Somerville then desired him to give them some account of the ball:

"You must apply to Alicia for all that," answered he, "I am the worst hand in the world at detailing such matters."

"But tell us—did Lord Ennerdale dance?"

"Dance! He would have had his eyes torn out if he had refused! That unconscionable old woman, Mrs. Rivers, was there, with her insipid daughter, and she almost raised a riot, and called in the aid of one or two termagants, as confident as herself, to oblige him to stand up with the girl. The whole scene disgusted and enraged me: and the more so, from observing, that many of Lady Isabella's *soi-disant* friends, enjoyed it. The Rivers' are highly allied, and there seems a sort of confederacy formed, to dispose of poor Louisa to the best advantage."

"How devoutly thankful ought I to be," mentally cried Adela, "that I was not there, to be exposed (by the very man who so severely censures these proceedings in others) to similar observations from those who saw him pursuing similar measures!"

She now solicited his escort into the Park, and taking Lady Harriet Mordington with her, they sat out on one of their accustomed rambles.

Adela had frequently observed, during these morning peregrinations, which she and Mr. Somerville sometimes extended as far as Kensington Gardens, a Lady, much muffled up, but apparently young, walking slowly with a gentleman whose ghastly paleness and evident debility, in addition to the loss of his left arm, struck every beholder with compassion. Mr. Somerville judged him, though he could hardly explain on what foundation, to belong to the army.

As she drew near the spot where this melancholy pair had usually attracted her attention—"I wonder," said Adela, "whether we shall meet our poor sick friend today. I call him our friend, because, though we know not who he is, it is impossible not

to feel interested by his suffering appearance."

"I see nothing of him, however, this morning," cried Mr. Somerville, "poor fellow! I should not wonder if he was, at last, unable to leave his bed. He has looked more and more reduced every time we have beheld him."

"I am afraid too," resumed Adela, "that he is poor! In sickness or in age, even I, who affect so much to disdain the fear of poverty, acknowledge it to be the severest of misfortunes."

"Poverty, in the strict sense of the word," said Mr. Somerville, "is no chimerical grievance under *any* circumstances. I mean not such poverty as our inconsiderate Alicia often complains of; a poverty that merely compels her to repress fantastic wishes, and to withstand extravagant temptations: but I mean, the fear or the reality of wanting bread, fuel, covering, and a home! Such indigence, or its remotest probability, is dreadful, and ought to shame all who dare repine at imaginary privations."

They proceeded, still engaged in serious discourse upon the probable circumstances

of the anonymous invalid, till insensibly they had reached one of the nearest entrances into Kensington Gardens.

"Let us go in a few minutes," said Adela, "as well to give Lady Harriet an opportunity of sitting down to rest herself, as to ascertain whether the sick stranger has been able to get so far."

Somerville had no will but hers, and they entered the garden.

It was yet early, and scarcely a solitary straggler appeared in view—

"I delight in this place when it is thus quiet and untenanted," said Adela; "there is something in its rich verdure, in the sudden contrast of its shade and silence to the glare and hurry without,—in its extent, its freshness, and tranquillity, that reposes at once both the eyes and the mind."

"If my days of courtship were to come over again," said Mr. Somerville, laughing, "I think I would bring Elinor hither to hear me breath my vows. When you are in love, Adela, you must lead your swain to saunter with you beneath these shades."

Adela thanked him for the timely counsel, and was leading Lady Harriet towards a

bench, when in one of the alcove seats, not far distant, she descried two figures resembling the sick officer and his female friend:—

"There, I believe, are our poor incognitos," said she; "take one turn past them, my dear brother, and bring me word whether my conjecture is right."

Somerville obeyed her; but returning hastily after a momentary glance—

"Adela," cried he, "have you any salts? The poor young man, I believe has fainted."

Adela flew to the spot, and beheld indeed the stranger for whom she felt so much concern, leaning in a senseless and almost dying state, upon the shoulder of the lady who so constantly attended him—

"Ah, madam," cried the sympathizing girl, "this is a pitiable sight!—What assistance can we afford you? We have no carriage here to convey you home; but this gentleman could perhaps meet with some servant at the palace willing to procure you one. Shall he try?"

The lady wept too much to speak, but bowed her thanks, and Mr. Somerville instantly darted off.

Adela had observed near the gate, a poor man who sold fruit and whey, and she now determined to apply to him for the loan of a glass to bring the stranger a little water.—

"Will you," said she to the lady, "permit this child," pointing to the young Harriet, "to remain a moment under your protection?"

Then hastening towards the gate, she had, breathless and panting, almost reached it, when she was suddenly encountered by Lady Ennerdale.—

"Miss Cleveland!" exclaimed she, greatly surprized—"Are you here alone, Ma'am?"

"Oh no, no!—But I go for some relief—a glass of water, any thing I can obtain, for a poor man who is ill in one of these alcoves."

"You should not leave the gardens unprotected!"

"I shall be perfectly safe.—Who would molest me at such an hour, and in so public a spot?"

She resumed her expeditious course whilst thus speaking, and Lady Ennerdale, scarcely knowing whether most to admire her rea-

dy humanity, or to disapprove a spirit which she deemed too adventurous, felt herself in some measure called upon to follow, and preserve her from any interruption.

Adela, meanwhile, had reached the fruiterer's humble stand, and fully effected her purpose. She rejoined Lady Ennerdale, bearing a glass of water in her hand, and anxious to hasten forward with it to the alcove; but her ladyship, addressing to her some enquiries about the invalid, she was obliged to accommodate her pace to the measured step of a companion whom, at that moment, she so little desired.

"Who is the person," said the Countess, "for whom you are giving yourself this trouble?"

"I neither know his name, nor have had any distinct view of his face," answered Adela; and then, relating briefly the simple matter of fact, she ended by expressing an earnest hope that Mr. Somerville would be successful in his endeavours to procure for the feeble stranger some immediate conveyance home.

Lady Ennerdale paused for a moment, and then said—

"I have a carriage near the gate, which your *protégé* and his companion are welcome to make what use of they please; and, perhaps, you and Mr. Somerville will permit me, when you walk back to town, to accompany you.—I shall a little retard the rapidity of your progress; but that is the only inconvenience you will experience from admitting me to be of your party."

Adela looked and spoke her thanks for this considerate offer with great animation: and the Countess relaxing more and more from her accustomed stateliness, now said—

"You long, most probably, at this very moment, to take wing again, and to outstrip my tardy movements. Give me the water, and whilst I carry it safely to the alcove, run forward, if you wish it, to announce my proposal."

Adela, hastily, but with real gratitude, saying—

"How very kind and good your ladyship is!" flew down the walk with the lightness of a fawn.

The young man, breathing short, and still unable to support himself, was, however, beginning to recover his perception—

"I bring you happy news," cried Adela, addressing his companion.—"A lady is approaching who offers you the use of her carriage home."

"Ah, madam," cried the female stranger, "how can we ever sufficiently thank you for the interest which you condescend to take in our distress?"

"You owe *me* no thanks, most certainly. I have been wholly powerless to serve you: but here is one, able and willing to be of real use to you."

Lady Ennerdale now joined them, and Adela took from her the water, and handed it to the invalid. It appeared to refresh him, and he sipped it with evident pleasure. Whilst thus engaged, his hat no longer shading his wan face, and his eyes being occasionally raised to look at his active new acquaintance, an indeterminate idea rushed into Adela's mind, that she knew him. Her colour rose, and she was debating within herself whether to address him immediately by his name, or to wait till he made it manifest that he had no wish for concealment; when Lady Ennerdale, who had herself been

regarding them with great commiseration, said—

"Is all this debility the remains of a fever?"

"No, madam," answered the young and lovely female sitting beside him; "it is the consequence of what he suffered in the hands of an unskilful surgeon."—

And she directed a shuddering look towards the vacant sleeve of his coat—

"Is he in the army?"

"Yes, madam; and he is but lately returned from abroad."—

"I hope that he *now* has good professional assistance, and many friends, who, though not more assiduous, are more experienced attendants than yourself."—

The young woman silently cast down her eyes, and the cheeks of her suffering companion were tinged with a faint blush.

Adela would now have given the world to be alone with them.—Every sentence that had been uttered, and every glance which she directed towards the wounded officer, convinced her, that she beheld in him, pale, emaciated, and half-dying as he

appeared, her early companion, and the darling of his respectable family, William Hampden!—How changed since last she had seen him: How desolate now seemed his situation, as well as shattered his constitution, and annihilated all his brilliant visions of military distinction!—Who his beautiful but helpless associate could be, and what were his reasons for holding himself so completely aloof from all his natural connections, she wished no less to learn than she was incapable of conjecturing. He appeared, from the conscious and almost stolen looks he sometimes cast towards her, to have recollected her with no less certainty than he was recognized himself; but he either wanted strength to speak, or from some private motive, was disinclined to enter into any explanation in the presence of Lady Ennerdale. Adela had too much delicacy to force him to a reluctant acknowledgment: yet it was painful to her to persevere in treating him as a stranger, and still more painful, to forbear expressing the sincere and deep affliction with which she beheld the melancholy result of his martial enthusiasm.

CHAP. VI.

JUSTIFICATION.

Mr. Somerville now returned, followed by a man who seemed to be an under gardener, and who had proffered his services to get the invalid a coach at the Kensington gate; and, if necessary, to assist in supporting him to it. Adela went forward to meet them, and related to her brother-in-law her fortunate encounter with Lady Ennerdale, and the loan which she had proposed of her own carriage. The gardener was then dismissed with thanks, and some more solid token of obligation; and Mr. Somerville accompanied her back to the alcove.

Young Hampden, still weak and tremulous, seemed to require an interval of yet longer tranquillity, 'ere he could safely venture to quit his present resting-place. Lady Ennerdale desired that he would not hurry himself; and then, telling Adela that she would seize the moment to enjoy a part, at least, of her accustomed ramble, she asked her, half-smiling, and with some little hesi-

tation, whether she was too much fatigued to do her the honor of accompanying her—

"Oh, no," said Adela, "I am accustomed to take much longer walks than this in the country."—

Leaving Lady Harriet, therefore, to the care of Mr. Somerville, who chose to remain with the strangers, she sat forward, with her gradually civilizing companion.—

"I never had the pleasure," said the Countess, "of meeting you here before: it is almost my daily haunt. I am sometimes joined by my nephew Emerdale, and half expect him this morning."—

Adela's thoughts instantly reverted to the scene of the preceding evening, and she heard this information with much disquiet, and an expression of countenance that denoted a total change in the tone of her spirits.

"Why," said her observant companion, after a short silence, "were you not at my daughter's ball last night?"

"I sent an excuse to Lady Isabella," said Adela, "which, if it had been properly delivered, would fully have accounted for my absence."—

"How charmed I am at this unexpected meeting! My dear Lady Ennerdale," added he, drawing her arm within his own, "how long have you been here? And how did you and Miss Cleveland thus contrive to find each other out?"

"Accident, at first, contrived it all," answered the old Lady: "but design on my part, has prolonged the interview beyond the measure, perhaps, of Miss Cleveland's patience."

She then detailed the manner of her meeting with Adela, and gave some account of the wounded officer.

"And are you," said Lord Ennerdale, addressing Adela, "wholly unacquainted with the person for whom you so benevolently exerted yourself?"

"I sincerely wish," she sorrowfully answered, "that I could, in truth, say, I am."—

He looked at her with much surprise, and earnestly cried—

"Do I also know him?—Who is he?"

"Oh, Lord Ennerdale, he is one whom you loved as a brother;—who, when you last saw him, was full of health, spirits, and

hope! He is now, dejected, maimed, and, for what reason I find it impossible to guess, abandoned, in sickness, and in suffering, by every natural friend!"

Lord Ennerdale looked heart-struck by this description—

"Ah, poor William!" cried he, "I fear the melancholy picture you have drawn, applies to him!"

"It does, indeed."

"And is he still in the garden?"

"Yes,—in yonder alcove."

"I will go to him this moment. I owe every thing to his father, and in saying that I have the affection of a brother for William, you do me, dear Miss Cleveland, no more than the strictest justice."

Then turning to Lady Ennerdale, he added—

"I am solicitous that my first interview with him should be without witnesses. Remain here then, my dear madam, with Miss Cleveland, and she will tell you more circumstantially what the relations between us have been, and whence originates the lively interest which both she and I take in this young soldier's fate."

Whilst he was still speaking, Mr. Somerville came up, to say, that the stranger now felt himself perfectly equal to walking to the carriage, and seemed anxious to depart without further delay. Adela took hold of his arm to prevent his going back to the alcove, and the earl hastened forward in the direction which she had pointed out to him.

A few words sufficed to give Lady Ennerdale all the information which was necessary to recal to her remembrance the early connection of her nephew with Dr. Hampden and his deserving family: and she readily acknowledged, that to the son of such a friend, every service and every consolation in the earl's power to bestow, was justly and undoubtedly due.

Lady Harriet had again placed herself under Adela's care, and the whole party continued patiently seated near the gate, till the re-appearance of Lord Ennerdale. He was slowly walking arm in arm with young Hampden, and accompanied by that young man's fair, and now, smiling associate.

Adela, encouraged by a look from the

earl, arose and stepped forward alone to meet them, and poor William, disengaging himself from his friend's support, frankly stretched forth his hand to her, saying with an air of ingenuous self-reproach—

"I have been a most ungracious—I fear, you think, ungrateful object of your benevolence! But pardon me, dear Miss Cleveland,—dear Adela, let me call you—and make all the allowance in your power, for the froward humours of a mind as diseased as the body which it now only half animates."

Adela gave him her hand with tears glistening in her eyes, and pressed his with all the cordiality of a sister: but her heart was too full for speech; and Lord Ennerdale, observing her emotion, tried to draw her attention towards William's companion—

"This lady," said he, "has claims upon your kindness, which, when you know that she is the wife of our friend, and his most tender nurse, you will, I am sure, not be slow to admit."

Adela was prepared for intelligence of this nature. Yet, when she looked at the

lovely and delicate creature introduced to her in so responsible a character—married, at scarcely more than seventeen, to a desponding, sick, and indigent ensign, the pity which she felt for her was even painfully oppressive, and she could only transfer to her in silent concern the hand that she had before held out to William. The devoted young woman received it with an aspect of gratitude, unmixed, however, with any symptom of self-compassion; and presently after, they all moved forward.

"Hampden declines at present," said Lord Ennerdale, "the proposal which I am most anxious he should accept, of an apartment in my house: but he promises in a few days, to become my inmate—and then, in a few weeks, I hope to tell you, that I have so ably assisted Mrs. Hampden, that we have nursed him into perfect health."

William mournfully shook his head, but made no answer; and Adela, seeing him thus heartless and despairing, thought of his adoring mother—of his kind and respectable father—and to hide the tears which

again rushed into her eyes, was forced to turn away her face.

On joining Lady Ennerdale, after young Hampden and his beautiful partner had been introduced to her, they all accompanied them to the carriage, which, had no sooner driven off with its new occupiers, than the dowager, who appeared to be as stout a walker as the youngest person present, took possession of the Earl's arm, and led the way towards town.

At Cumberland Gate, Mr. Somerville and Adela bade her good morning; she parted from them with great civility; and her son-in-law continued faithful in his attendance upon her, till she reached her own door.

She was silent a few minutes after the separation had taken place, and then, in an accent of unusual kindness, said—

"My dear Algernon, I think it will give you pleasure to hear; that the conduct, this morning, of your young friend Miss Cleveland, has made her appear, even to my prejudiced eye, in a very amiable point of view."

"It certainly *does* give me great pleasure," answered he; "but no surprise."

"Nor does it," resumed her ladyship, smiling, "surprise *me* much, to find you so ready to credit the irresistible power of her attractive qualities!—But will you forgive me, if I speak of her with perfect unreserve? —I have strong suspicions that you love her; and though I acknowledge the little right I have for interference, and foresee the little prospect I have of being listened to with conviction, yet, hear me, at least, with patience, and with a firm persuasion, that I now am influenced against this young lady, —personally considered—by no bitterness of disapprobation."

"This opening," said Lord Ennerdale, "could you be aware of the recent subject of my meditations, you would acknowledge, is well calculated to alarm me. But I will be completely undisguised with you, dear Madam. Nothing *can* alarm me, at present, that does not proceed from Adela's own lips. I *do* love her; and it is my irrevocable purpose to make proposals to her! Of their event, I am wholly uncertain: but should it be propitious, I hope to obtain from you, very shortly, a favourable reception for her as my wife. Spare, spare me

then, dear Lady Ennerdale, all unavailing representations. I know the worst that you can say; I know that Adela has a mother, who, by some, may be considered as reflecting disgrace upon her daughter. But shall *I* think thus? Shall I forget, that whatever may be the principles of that mother, she has been in no danger of contamination from them, by ever having lived with her? Shall I forget, that her childhood, her youth, nearly her whole life, has been spent under the care of beings the most primitively simple, and exemplarily moral? Do I not also know, that Lady Rosalvan herself (were vice hereditary) is less vicious than weak? Her irritability of temper, and shallowness of understanding, far more than her perversity of nature, led her to ruin. Does her daughter inherit these imperfections of judgment and of temper? No, most assuredly; she is, on the contrary, peculiarly distinguished for the excellence of both. Then why should she be supposed capable of transgressions into which nothing but the want of those advantages precipitated her mother?"

"This," said the Countess, "may be a

good defence of Miss Cleveland, individually, and a reasonable ground of belief, that she will, in her own person, maintain a pure and blameless reputation. But will it satisfy —will it even occur to the public mind?"

"Dear madam," cried the Earl, "in transactions relating to domestic life, it is not so much the public mind which a man has to satisfy, as, first of all, his *own*, and next, the mind of his family, and of his intimate associates. Now, with respect to myself, the arguments which you have heard me adduce, have fully and permanently set my feelings at rest; and since they are such as even your ladyship allows, give reasonable assurance of Adela's undeviating uprightness, why should I fear the less scrupulous judgment of any other individual amongst my connexions?

"I remember the time, my dear Ennerdale," resumed the Countess, "when the sentiments you held respecting these stains upon family honour were widely different! —Soon after you were placed at Eton, the two young Harbournes were sent there. Have you forgotten the force and feeling with which you spoke of the discredit which

you thought the guilt of their parents had attached to their name?"

"I have a very imperfect recollection of the circumstance, or of the petulant comments which, as an inexperienced boy, it might draw from me. This only I clearly remember:—that the misconduct there, was flagrant on *both* sides. The father, who was in some official situation, had incurred infamy by notorious peculation, and was forced to fly his country to avoid a public trial; and the mother was too shameless to be tolerated—almost too vile to be mentioned. Of the two boys who were sent to Eton, I hope I never spoke with contempt, since I have often thought of them with concern and pity. The eldest was old enough to know, and most poignantly to feel, the degraded situation of his family. He looked broken-spirited; he held aloof from all intimacy with his fellow students;—nothing could rouse him to animation or to mirth; and there was a sort of indignant dejection in his countenance, so striking and so singular, that the scholars who took any interest in his fate (and I certainly was one), used to say, that rather than

be weighed down by such early and oppressive melancholy, they should pray for death. But, dearest madam, does this story bear any affinity to that of Adela?"

The Countess could not but admit, that the facts differed widely: yet it was perfectly evident, that however unwilling she might be to quarrel with the Earl; however softened she might feel, by the morning's adventure, in favour of her he so steadily defended, her internal averseness from the match continued nearly as potent as ever. But arrived now within sight of her own door, she compelled herself to forbear all further animadversions; conversed for a few minutes on general and indifferent subjects, and then suffered her young escort to take his leave.

CHAP. VII.

INTERRUPTION.

WEARY as she was, Adela, on reaching home, had hastened immediately with a detail of the occurrences in Kensington Gar-

dens, to the apartment of her sister, and remained with her till obliged to dress for dinner. No guests being expected, her toilet was plain and expeditious, and descending to the drawing room the first of the family, she there, very unexpectedly, beheld Lord Ennerdale.

"I fear," cried he, "that you will think I unmercifully haunt you!—After so recently parting from you, are you not out of all patience thus speedily to find me in your path again?"

Adela assured him, that she was rejoiced to be furnished with so early an opportunity of talking over the affairs of their friend William Hampden—

"Have you," added she, "seen him since his return to town?"

"Yes; I have spent two hours at his lodgings."

"And has he given you any explanation of his desolate situation with which you are at liberty to entrust me?"

"How delighted I am to find you so willing to become my auditress! I invited myself here to-day, for the sole purpose of asking you to let me play the orator on this,

and many other subjects, which I am most impatient to discuss with you.—Your readiness to hear me, will, I hope, render me eloquent—and my own solicitude not to be heard in vain, will, I hope also, gift me with persuasion.—Are you going out this evening?"

"Not till ten o'clock—and between that hour and the present, I think, my Lord, you may find full leisure to give your eloquence the fairest trial."—

"But I must condition that you will not hear me in a jesting mood! "*Good gentle one, let me sustain no scorn;—I would be loath to cast away my speech.*"

"If your speech is of poor William, there is no fear of my listening to you with too little seriousness!"

"How much better I can bear to hear these expressions of kindness for him, than I can endure to witness the distinctions which you confer upon some other of your friends!"

Adela was assured, that he alluded to her late interview with Talbot Cleveland, and felt herself change colour. However, with

all the steadiness in her power, she answered—

"The distinctions, as you call them, which I may have been seen conferring upon one friend, I would quite as readily confer upon another, since they have never originated from feelings of exclusive regard, but have been as impartial, as I wish them to be thought undesigning."—

"Indeed! then you would not refuse to *any* humble suppliant—myself, for instance, —the same boon which you have granted to former petitioners?"

"I must know the sort of boon you mean!"

"You are afraid of committing yourself by too positive an answer! Do you guess, that the object of my application, is a short audience after dinner in Mr. Somerville's study?"

Adela, thrown off her guard by a request so little anticipated, was half ready to exclaim, "wherefore?—to what purpose?"—But checking herself, though the sudden glow in her cheeks visibly denoted much greater agitation than she wished to betray:

"I cannot," she hesitatingly answered, "promise—I cannot be quite certain of having a minute to spare; my sister Erington will expect me to be preparing for our engagement."—

Lord Ennerdale beheld the flutter into which his solicitation had thrown her, with sentiments of alternate delight and apprehension; and now gaily said—

"Your sister Erington caused so much mischief last night, that the least she can do, this evening, is to abstain from the prevention of some good. And, believe me, it will be a great good, to throw no impediment in the way of the conference for which I am interceding.—I have much to say to you—it has been my fixed determination, from the instant I quitted this house yesterday evening, to visit it again as speedily as possible—to lay open to you my heart—and to search, as deeply as you would suffer me, into your's!"—

This speech, which was begun with a laugh, ended with an air, and in a voice so serious, that Adela, again colouring,—perplexed—confused, knew not which way to

look, and had seldom felt more thankful than when relieved by the entrance of Mrs. Erington.

"Oh, how enchanted I am," cried the fair widow, "to find that the convent gates are once more thrown open to admit male visitors!—I really began to think that the interdict would last for ever!"

"And pray," said Lord Ennerdale, "have the regulations of your monastery been very austere?—Were you condemned to a silence, as rigorous as that observed by the monks of La Trappe? Were you enjoined severe discipline, strict abstinence, perpetual vigils, —and the exclusion of even brothers, or —*cousins?*"—

His arch eye glanced towards Adela as he pronounced the last word, and unable to endure its significance, she turned away, and walked to the window.

"I assure you," resumed Mrs. Erington, unconscious of his full meaning, "that except Talbot Cleveland, who is of no more consequence to Adela or me than Somerville himself, it is now three weeks, three days, and odd hours, since any male visage has presented itself before us! A

few have peeped in at the street door, and the grim Cerberus to whom its guardianship is entrusted, admitted a few into his master's study: but up-stairs, no soul has presumed to march, till you, my Lord, ventured to come, and dissolve the spell. There's poor dear Sir Patrick Harley, Adela! Upon my word, if I did not do all in my power to keep up your interest with him, there is some danger that this long absence would entirely dislodge you from his heart. But I talk to him for you—I listen to him for you, (when he has any thing to say!)—I smile upon him for you—and, last night, I even danced with him for you."

"And some day or other," said Adela, smiling, "perhaps, you may marry him for me!"

Mrs. Erington was unprepared for this answer: it somewhat disconcerted, and, for a moment, made her blush;—yet, affecting perfect ease—

"My dear child," cried she, "in the momentous concern of marrying, and giving away in marriage, it is only sovereign princes who are allowed to shackle themselves by proxy. If you can produce au-

thority to justify such a proceeding in private life, and are too lazy to go to church with him yourself, I will put on a bridal habit, and appear there for you, any morning you please."

"I leave the determination of time and place entirely to you and Sir Patrick," returned Adela; "whoever is kind enough to become my representative in the business, must be at the trouble of arranging every preliminary, without molesting me with the slightest consultation."

Lord Ennerdale, much amused by this little dialogue, gave to it no interruption, but rejoiced to witness the calm and complete indifference with which Adela bore so direct an attack on the subject of her wealthy admirer.

During dinner, his spirits alternately varying from grave to gay, according to the direction which his thoughts pursued, exposed him, from the sprightly Alicia, to considerable raillery, and some very embarrassing interrogations. Adela, to escape any similar remarks, compelled herself to keep up with Mr. Somerville an almost incessant conversation on whatever subject

first occurred to her mind. Throughout the whole meal, her eyes rested not for a single moment on the face of Lord Ennerdale, or were even raised, except by an effort, from her plate. The conference to which she was invited never absented itself from her thoughts. She wondered upon what pretext he would, in the presence of her sister and Mr. Somerville, call upon her to fulfil her tacit promise. She anticipated, with the sincerest uneasiness, the unconquerable embarrassment which she was assured of feeling;—and, more than once, she formed the secret determination of flying to her own room the instant they rose from table, and there to remain till all danger of such a summons was at an end. But had Lord Ennerdale merited to be thus girlishly trifled with? Could she ever account to him for a slight which, to hear him even ask the motive of, would fill her with redoubled confusion?—She was provided with no satisfactory answer to these self-interrogations; and, with whatever disquiet, finally resolved to observe the engagement into which she was understood to have entered.

Mrs. Erington sat longer than was her

custom after dinner, though encouraged to stay neither by the animation of her companions, nor the success of her own sallies. The conclusion of the meal was cheerful to no one present; the Earl became so absent, he scarcely heard a word she said, and almost feared to unclose his lips, lest his first sentence should be—"For pity's sake, terminate this tedious repast!"

Mr. Somerville, wearied by a long ride, in addition to his walk with Adela, was sleepy and languid; and Adela herself, as the moment drew nearer for the interview to which she looked forward, grew more and more disturbed, and not only lost all courage to speak, but all inclination to make the effort.

At length, the fair matron arose, and at the same instant, with greater alacrity than it was perhaps politic to shew, Lord Ennerdale sprung from his chair to open for her the dining-parlour door—

"You are wonderfully alert, my lord," she laughingly observed, "in facilitating our means of retreat."

"Do not say so," cried he; "you will almost tempt me to forsake yon slumberer,"

looking towards Mr. Somerville, "and follow you to the drawing-room with my vindication. But that would be treachery to my friend William Hampden: I have a message from him to deliver to you, Miss Cleveland, which I am anxious to communicate before you write to any of his friends. Will you, for that purpose, allow me five minutes private conversation?"

He waited for no answer, he gave her no time to deliberate, but snatching up one of the candles, he took her hand, and ere she knew whither he was leading her, she found herself alone with him in Mr. Somerville's study.

Her hand trembled within his, and her colour varied from pale to red with such rapidity, that, feeling for her confusion, he resolved, by making William, at the opening of the conference, the real object of whom he should speak, to give her time to recover greater tranquillity.

"I have ventured to promise for you," cried he, relinquishing her hand after she was seated, "that you will very soon pay poor Hampden a visit, and hear from his own lips the reasons he assigns for keeping

his parents in ignorance of his present abode. They are plausible, but not convincing; and, I trust, you will have sufficient influence, to induce him to give them up. *I* exhorted him to do so in vain."

Relieved by this beginning, and half persuaded, that the affairs of young Hampden were designed to be the sole topics of their discourse, Adela, ashamed of her previous trepidation, now said, with comparative calmness,

"May I not be put out of suspense this evening, by learning these reasons from you?"

"Why, no;" replied he, after some hesitation; "I have concerns of still nearer interest, respecting which I am too impatient to be put out of suspense myself, to afford the time necessary for a full discussion, at the present moment, of the particulars which you require. I can only recommend to you, not to be too hasty in writing to William's family. This was all I pledged myself with him to undertake, and all that I am now disposed to perform for him. I must not lose the opportunity which I have been so earnest to obtain, of becoming a suppliant to you in my own behalf."

All Adela's emotion recurred at these words; nor was Lord Ennerdale himself, as the tone of his voice sufficiently indicated, exempt from participating in her agitation. He paused a moment; stole a glance at her downcast face—and then added—

"I see, by the almost painful confusion which oppresses you, that you anticipate the import of what I have to say:—but anticipate it, sweetest Adela, with less affright! Remember, that even from your infancy you have known me as a *friend*, and endeavour now to think of me without consternation as a *lover*. I have long been seeking by every means (short of speech) to prepare you for this declaration, and to make you acquainted with the state of my heart. Ill indeed must my looks have corresponded with my feelings, if they have wholly failed to indicate to you, how dear, how precious to that heart you are become! Tell me, with the ingenuousness that marked your earliest years,—tell me, have you remained absolutely unconscious of your influence? And are you now utterly insensible to its avowal?"

He had taken her hand during this speech,

and, at its conclusion, attentively regarding her, awaited her answer with the most anxious suspense. She tried to articulate some intelligible sentence: but long accustomed to repress her real sentiments in his presence —half incredulous of possessing the power which he attributed to her—fluttered, grateful, and happy beyond the possibility of expressing what she felt, she could only pronounce a few incoherent words, amongst which the name of her father was all that the earl could clearly distinguish. With renewed energy, he again addressed her—

"I fear not your father!" cried he, half-smiling—"It is your father's lovely daughter I would propitiate.—It is her coldness I would conquer—her reserve I would banish! —Oh, my most dear Adela! if yet your heart is disengaged—if yet it is your own to give,—bestow it on that Algernon Mordington who so long has known and felt all its value!—Is there no softening power in that name?—Was it not once familiar to your ear—pronounced with kindness by your lips —lodged with affection in your bosom?— Does it not recal to you our days of mutual confidence—of open and avowed attachment?

—Beloved Adela, let these days again recur!—Whose disposition are you so well qualified to estimate impartially as mine? You knew me when, though solicitous for your regard, I had no interest in seeking to obtain it by false pretences. You saw me daily, with all my imperfections on my head!—You hourly associated with me when, whatever the character becomes afterwards, it is incapable of systematic dissimulation. At that happy, and regretted period, you loved me, dearest Adela,—you scrupled not even to tell me so! Ah, then,—unless you believe me wholly changed, wholly degenerated, refuse not to admit me to your heart again!—Let me read my sentence in your looks!—let me, through their medium, obtain assurance, that you fear not to entrust your happiness to my keeping!—It shall be dearer to me than my own existence—held more precious than any other earthly deposit!"

As Adela, penetrated by the tenderness of this language, raised her eyes to answer its animated speaker, a hasty knock at the room-door startled them both, and the next moment, Mrs. Errington putting her head

within it, held forth a sealed note towards her sister, saying—

"I beg pardon for interrupting your confab, good folks—but here is a *billet-doux*, Adela, from my aunt Cleveland, or one of the girls, and the servant has orders to wait for an answer."

It would have been a satisfaction past expression to Lord Ennerdale, to have dispatched at once this ill-timed *billet-doux*, and the lady who brought it, into the wilds of Siberia!—He bit his lips—almost murmured an imprecation, and stepping reluctantly forward, conveyed the note from the hand of Mrs. Erington to that of Adela.

"May I come in whilst you read it?" inquired the fair intruder—"I am curious to know what it can be about."

Again Lord Ennerdale most devoutly wished her ten thousand miles off; whilst Adela, faintly complying with her request for admission, broke open the note, and read, half aloud, as follows—

"My dear Adela,

"We were all going to-night to Lady "Wilbrooke's great concert: but mamma, "for some reason or other (I believe, a little

" conjugal *fracas*), chuses to do penance,
" and remain at home. Barbara and I have
" no ambition to imitate the example; and
" as we know, that you and Mrs. Erington
" purpose to be there, we beg you will al-
" low us to join your party.

" Pray send a line to say whether this
" arrangement is practicable, and whether
" we may come to you early enough to
" spend half an hour with Mrs. Somerville
" before we set out.

" Your's ever, my dear Adela, very truly,
" JEMIMA CLEVELAND."

The answer to this request was obliged to be affirmative, and when Adela had written and dispatched it, Mrs. Erington said—

" Do you know, my dear little sister, that it is almost nine o'clock, and full time for you to begin dressing. Pray put off the remainder of your private communications with this discontented-looking gentleman, till to-morrow."

Aware how unwelcome to Lord Ennerdale must be such an exhortation, Adela was internally much chagrined at being compelled to comply with it. He was, himself, too seriously provoked to dare hazard,

any expostulation: but silently suffering her to be led away, he rejoined Mr. Somerville.

Adela well knew, that from the flightiness of Mrs. Erington, there was every reason to apprehend the publication of this conference in the presence of Jemima. Without a suspicion of its real purport, the fair widow, was yet extremely disposed to be witty upon its mysterious appearance; and, as thoughtless of mischief as she was unconcerned to effect good, she rallied Adela unmercifully upon her young counsellor's legal abilities; wondered what they were plotting, and supplicated, whether it was treason or not, to be admitted as early as possible into their confidence. All this convinced Adela that the interview would be made the principal subject of conversation the whole evening;—yet, to caution Mrs. Erington, without exciting suspicions of the truth, was impracticable. With whatever uneasiness and distrust, therefore, she was compelled to let the business take its own course.

The arrival of Jemima and her sister, and the exertion which she felt called upon to

make in order to receive them with civility and apparent satisfaction, drove from her remembrance, for a time, the alarm she had experienced; and even to Jemima, the most penetrating of observers, there appeared nothing in her aspect or manners differing materially from their accustomed ease.

Fortunately, Mrs. Erington was diverted from the subject which Adela so much dreaded to hear her start, by eagerness to describe Lady Isabella Annesley's ball, and by industry to excite envy in her auditors of the gayety and amusement which she declared herself to have enjoyed at it.

Attended by Mr. Somerville, the four kinswomen at length drove to Lady Wilbrooke's. On their entrance into the concert-room, they found it already so crowded, that it was manifestly impossible, not merely to procure seats, but even to gain space in which unmolestedly to stand. Adela soon grew dissatisfied with her post near the door; it subjected her to great observation; to continual interruption whilst listening to the music, and to the disagreeable necessity of being nearly surrounded by men whom she either knew very slightly, or was wholly

unacquainted with. Mrs. Errington, on the contrary, and the two Clevelands submitted to their situation with perfect unconcern,—and declined making any effort to change it.

At the conclusion of an exquisite performance upon the harp, scarcely three notes of which Adela had been able distinctly to hear, she begged Mr. Somerville would assist her in trying to reach an inner room, where she hoped at once to procure a chair, and to suffer less disturbance. He immediately gave her his arm, and they moved slowly forward.

Scarcely had they proceeded half a dozen steps, when Talbot Cleveland perceived, and joined them. Adela had no wish to meet him; yet, candidly allowing that he was wholly unanswerable for the pain which she had endured since, and at their last interview, she forced herself to address him without any diminution of kindness, and, on finding Mr. Somerville was likely to be detained by some gentlemen who had approached to speak with him, she accepted Talbot's offer of continuing her progress under his escort.

The throng being by no means so great

in the interior of the room as it was near the door, she soon succeeded in reaching the inner apartment, and in securing a quiet and convenient seat. Talbot remained with her, though she repeatedly urged him to go and inform his sisters and Mrs. Erington what excellent accommodations she had found. At length, however, the accents of a female singer of great celebrity, whom he extremely admired, attracted him again into the music-room; and he promised, as soon as the song was over, to convey the message with which he was entrusted to the three ladies.

Adela, meanwhile, beholding around her none but faces of the gravest and most matronly decorum, maintained her station, without the smallest scruple, satisfied that, in joining so respectable a circle, though unaccompanied by any one whom she knew, she had at least chosen a situation of the most perfect propriety.

When the air was over which Talbot had quitted her to go and hear, an elderly lady, complaining bitterly of the pressure and heat in the concert-room, made her way into the comparatively cool asylum to which

Adela had retreated, and fanning herself violently, seated herself upon the same sofa, and entered into conversation with a sedate and somewhat stately dame who occupied its further end. Previous to the arrival of this indefatigable fanner, the lady already accommodated, had appeared half asleep; and, in reality, was, without much interest in any thing that was passing, patiently waiting for a summons to return home with two fashionable daughters, then flirting in the adjoining apartment.

"My dear Lady Berindale," said the bustling new comer, "you can't imagine how thankful I am to have succeeded at last in getting out of the suffocating atmosphere of that dreadful music-room! I really thought I should have died whilst I was forced to remain in it! How prodigiously unwholesome such a concourse must be! I always disliked these crowded assemblies, but since my asthma has been so bad, I have really contracted quite a horror of them. Nothing upon earth should have induced me to come, but the wish of hearing the new singer, and the impossibility I am under of going to the Opera for that purpose. I have

given up all public places for nearly two years: but really, this is quite as bad, and during the whole song, I was so hemmed in, so jostled, so stifled for want of air, that I every moment expected to sink down in a fainting fit!"

"Whereabouts did you sit," in a strong Caledonian accent enquired her friend?—"Could you not procure a chair near the staircase door?"

"Near the door, my dear madam! Why that would have been the very worst place I could have chosen! The throng there, is indescribable, and the buz and confusion beyond any thing that you can imagine. By this time, I dare say, the landing-place and the stairs are quite choaked up, and many persons will probably go away without having been in the concert-room at all. But what surprises me the most, is the voluntary *choice* which many ladies make of the doorway for their permanent station. They really must be hustled and elbowed from side to side, till they are quite black and blue. There is a beautiful young creature standing there at this very minute, whom I should seriously have pitied, had I not heard her

absolutely *refuse* a seat which a gentleman was sent across the room by Lady Isabella Annesley to offer her. I asked who she was; for her face and figure struck me wonderfully; and I was told that her name is Errington."

The grave north-countrywoman, who, when she heard of a "beautiful young creature." in the thickest of the crowd, expected no less than to find that it was one of her own daughters, now, rendered somewhat peevish by the disappointment, cried out—

"And don't you know who Mrs. Errington was?"

"Not in the least:—pray, is there any history belonging to her?"

"She is one of the daughters of that Mrs. Cleveland, who, you may remember, some years ago, was so celebrated for her beauty, her gay parties, her taste, and high fashion."

"Bless me! is she indeed? Well, and what is become of Mrs. Cleveland? I have quite forgotten how all her celebrity ended: but it, somehow, runs in my head that her splendour set, at last, behind a dark cloud."

"Dark indeed! She eloped with Sir

Frederick Rosalvan, was divorced, and for many years, has assumed her paramour's name. Whether she really was ever married to him has often been questioned: but as there is no family, it matters little; especially as she now, poor infatuated creature, has formed another connection. Sir Frederic is dead; and his widow, as she styles herself, has bestowed her hand, and the whole amount of the property which he left her, upon a low-born adventurer—a man who once lived in actual servitude beneath my roof! He was valet to my eldest son, and dismissed for impertinence, and frequent intoxication."

This dialogue, far from being uttered in a suppressed voice, was spoken as audibly as if the two ladies had been conversing in a private dressing-room. Adela lost not a single sentence of it; and every word struck her to the heart, and filled her with shame and sorrow. Pale and disconsolate, she hung her head, and absorbed by deep, but painful attention, she marked no object around her, nor had even courage for an instant to raise her eyes.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the astonished

auditress of a tale in many respects but too authentic. "This is a sad history. But where does the poor woman live now?"

"In Scotland, and at no great distance from Lord Berindale's estate. However, I never had a thought of visiting her, even in the life-time of Sir Frederic, for it seems to me peculiarly incumbent upon the mother of grown-up daughters, scrupulously to avoid all intercourse with these kind of dubious characters—these women of only half-retrieved reputation. Sir Frederic was upon friendly terms with my lord, and frequently came to our house: but there the intimacy rested. Last winter, I was surprized to find, that Mr. Cleveland permitted his youngest daughter, and the only one who remains single, to spend several months with this unhappy woman. It was an imprudent thing, and served no other purpose than that of introducing the young person to improper associates, and of reviving the suspicion of her own illegitimacy. I know, that when the divorce took place, a strong disbelief prevailed of her legal claim to the name of Cleveland; and it is apparent, by her having constantly been excluded from the roof

of her nominal father, that his own doubts subsist as powerfully as ever.

"Oh Heaven!" thought Adela, "and is all this asserted and believed of her on whom the generous Algernon has bestowed his heart!—How little am I entitled to such a distinction! How unworthy should I be, were I to take advantage of an affection so highly valued, but, alas! so undeservedly conferred!"

Unable to endure the humiliation of listening longer to a dialogue so wounding to her feelings, she arose in great disturbance, and, with tears trembling in her eyes, had advanced a few steps towards the outward room, when the hasty approach of Lord Ennerdale, who had been observing her from the door, arrested her progress, and aggravated all her distress.

"You look ill," cried he, with great anxiety—"you can scarcely stand!—Return to your seat, and let me bring you a glass of water."

He would then have conducted her back to the place she had just quitted: but though determined to conceal from him no part of what she had heard, she shrunk

from the idea of doing it in such a spot—and still more she shrunk from the danger of being revealed to Lady Berindale as the Miss Cleveland of whom she had been with such indiscretion conversing.—Hastily rejecting his assistance, she earnestly exclaimed—

"Oh, no, no—I cannot go back to that seat—I cannot, at least, suffer you to lead me to it!—Pray leave me—I am not ill—I am better—pray leave me!"

She scarcely knew what she said. Her dread of his persisting in desiring to conduct her whither she, with so much justice, apprehended to go, was irrepressible. She forced herself onwards, and when she reached the door-way, stopped, and leant against its side, in a tremour that shook her whole frame.

Lord Ennerdale, meanwhile, amazed and grieved at the unqualified repulse which he had received—and not merely perplexed, but in some degree offended by it, spoke to her no more; but involuntarily observing every change in her countenance, and becoming more and more apprehensive for her, he suddenly darted through the group

which surrounded the door, and, in a few minutes, Mr. Somerville, alarmed and hurried, was at her side—

"Ennerdale says that you are ill, my dear Adela," cried he, "and your looks confirm the intelligence. What is the matter? Has the heat overpowered you? Lean on me, and I will take you to an open window."

Adela accepted his arm, but declined any further assistance from him, saying—

"All I want, and the only thing that will make me quite well, is to get away from this house—at least from this room, as speedily as possible."

"Alicia will never be induced," said Mr. Somerville, "to go away so early. Here, however, she comes, to settle the matter in her own proper person."

Adela hastened forward, anxious to preserve her sister from being subjected to the observation of Lady Berindale and her friend.

"Why you poor little vapourish thing," cried Mrs. Erington, "what in the world has happened to you? Lord Ennerdale came to me with a report of your illness

that quite scared me! But I see not that any thing ails you, beyond a little preponderance of the lily over the rose. What has frightened you, child? Have you seen a ghost? Or heard a warning voice bidding you beware the Ides of March?"

"I have seen nothing that does not make me solicitous to get home. Will you let Mr. Somerville enquire for the carriage?"

"There is not the smallest chance of its being arrived: but, however, if it will give you any satisfaction to have the enquiry made, pray don't be scrupulous on my account.—Send your beau to collect all the information for you he can."

Mr. Somerville was then hastening away, but tapping him lightly upon the shoulder as he passed her, Mrs. Erington added—

"Not so fast, good brother. Let it be fully understood before you go, that even if you *should* find this same carriage, it will not directly be in my power to accompany Adela home, unless our fair cousins are as well disposed to make their exit as I am."

"That is true," cried the rational Adela; "I will therefore make a merit of necessity,

and remain here as contentedly as I can, till you are all ready to go."

"This is being a good girl!" cried Mrs. Erington, "and a reasonable girl, and an accommodating girl!—So now, come with me, and I will lead you to a snug seat beside Lady Isabella Annesley; and when every body is willing to depart, you shall have notice."

This scheme perfectly according with Adela's wishes, she thankfully agreed to it, and exchanging Mr. Somerville's arm for that of her sister, they proceeded together towards the spot occupied by Lady Isabella.—

"How do you think I shall be received, Alicia?" enquired Adela, as they advanced —"Do you imagine, that Lady Isabella will resent my breach of engagement last night?"

"Why, no;—you have two or three warm friends in her family, who probably have told her, that it is not pretty to bear malice; and she always acts, and speaks, and, I believe, *feels*, just as she sees those act, speak, and feel who are about her. She is a mere reflector of the light and heat

given by others: but, to her dying day, she will never give any of her own."

Had she been gifted with the very spirit of divination, the fair Alicia, could not have formed a more accurate judgment. Lady Isabella greeted Adela with the most gracious gentleness. She expressed her concern to hear that she had been indisposed; resigned to her the chair in which she had been sitting, because it was placed near a window, which, at pleasure, could be opened; and would listen to no apologies for what had passed the preceding evening; assuring her, that it would have given her far more pain than pleasure to have withdrawn her from home, at a moment when, either her spirits or her health, disinclined her to go out.

This encouraging kindness, Adela attributed solely to the good offices of Lord Ennerdale. Some part of it, however, was to be ascribed to the relenting disposition with which her ladyship had heard her spoken of that day, at dinner, by the old Countess; and the rest was the work of Mr. Annesley, ever indefatigable in seeking to repair the shock which he had once given to her fa-

vourable opinion of the lady to whom his friend Ennerdale was so devotedly attached.

Soothed, however, by a reception so flattering, and confiding in the security of the tranquil station which she had at length attained, Adela had leisure to reflect upon, and deeply to regret, the abruptness of her treatment of Lord Ennerdale. She knew, that it was to his interference, she was indebted for the approach and offered assistance of Mr. Somerville. She longed to thank him for his attention—to make excuses for having driven him from her—to promise him a full explanation of the feelings by which she had been impelled:—and whilst these secret aspirations were forming in her mind, a voice close behind her, gentle, yet serious, said—

"May I *now*, at least, be permitted to express a hope that you are better?"

"Oh, you are come, I trust," cried she, turning towards the earl with the promptest alacrity, "to tell me, that you pardon my ungrateful misconduct!—It was such, as scarcely to entitle me ever to be thought of with interest by you again!"

Joy flashed from his eyes, and brightened every feature, as he fervently, yet in almost whispered accents, answered—

"When I cease, adored Adela, to take an interest in all that relates to *you*, I must have ceased to exist!"

"And have I really, upon such easy terms," resumed she, smiling, "made my peace?—I expected that, at least, you would require me to clear up what had passed: and though I well knew, that *when* cleared up, you would make every allowance for the strangeness of my conduct—yet, I own, I had no hope of so generous a pardon without being asked for any explanation at all!—Are you not a little afraid, that such ready placability may encourage new offences?"

"I am afraid of nothing, but that I have not self-command sufficient, to endure such exquisite kindness of looks and language without betraying the grateful transport they inspire! Speak not to me thus before all these people, lest I should forget their existence, and fall at your feet to thank you!"

Adela coloured, yet laughed at this flight, and said no more; but finding that he had contrived to procure a seat in the recess of

the window, and meant to retain his station near her, she leant back in her chair, and whilst apparently listening to the music, indulged, in total but placid silence, such soothing and complacent meditations, that it seemed as if the mere vicinity of one in whose faith she so implicitly confided, had power to banish every uneasy retrospection, and to suspend every anticipating fear.

"*Être avec les gens qu'on aime*," says la Bruyère, "*cela suffit : rêver, leur parler, ne leur parler point, penser à eux, penser à des choses indifférentes, mais auprès d'eux, tout est égal.*"

Feelings exactly corresponding with these, seemed to have taken possession of Lord Ennerdale, for after a considerable period, during which the silence between them was mutual, he leant towards her, and said—

"In the interval which has just elapsed, though I have sometimes regretted that I was not at liberty to speak to you without restraint, I have experienced more serene and perfect happiness than it is in the power of language to express.—Before I secured possession of this enviable post, you had given me a cordial which has kept my heart

in a glow ever since; and every note to which I have listened has appeared sweeter, every object I have regarded has looked fairer, and every prospect of futurity on which my thoughts have rested, has been more brightly tinged with felicity, than at any former period of my life!—I wish you could tell me that these feelings have been reciprocal!"

The lips of Adela were silent, but she turned to him with a smile so expressive, an air of such gentle and entire participation in the sentiments which he had described, that, enchanted, and thrown off his guard, he half snatched her hand—but instantly dropping it, started up, saying in a low voice—

"This corner is not favourable to the preservation of discretion! I must go into temporary banishment, or I shall betray the excess of my happiness to the whole room!"

"Your place, then," said Adela, "will be filled up by a successor to whom I am by no means ambitious that you should surrender it."

She glanced her eyes, whilst speaking, towards Sir Patrick Harley, who, standing

at a little distance, was observing her with his accustomed pertinacity, and had already made sundry efforts to approach nearer, and to obtain a permanent station beside her.

"At such a hazard," resumed the Earl, immediately re-seating himself, "I will not relinquish it an instant! Yet, I know few obvious candidates for the vacancy whom I could with less emotion yield it up to!"

"Would you not," said Adela, archly, "resign it with equal composure to Talbot Cleveland?"

"To him, of all men living, with the least! But my faith in your goodness towards myself is so much stronger to-night than it has hitherto ever been, that, even to Talbot, I could *almost* renounce my post without a pang!"

Adela, now, willing to direct the conversation to subjects less immediately relating to themselves, asked him whether William Hampden's residence was at a considerable distance from Cumberland Place?

"No," replied he, "it is in Dorset Street. You will, I hope, very shortly find a leisure moment to visit him, and to afford relief to the almost total solitude in

which his sweet wife lives immured. I must not here," added he, " talk to you of what concerns my own interests, and therefore I will make use of the opportunity to acquaint you with the heads of poor William's story. Yet, after all, I know not why I should so liberally and constantly apply to him that lamentable epithet! It is true, that he possesses no portion of what the world calls prosperity: he is sick; keenly alive to the apprehension of incurring neglect; distracted at the thought of sinking into insignificance; and torn with self-reproach for pursuing, with regard to his own family, a mode of conduct so culpably clandestine. Still, however, I consider him, in one respect, as an object of envy. He is secure for life of the woman of his choice; their mutual attachment is touching, and, I sincerely believe, likely to be as permanent as it is fervent. His lovely young partner hovers round him, watches his looks, ministers to his wants, and soothes his despondency with an assiduity resulting so entirely from the tenderness of her affection—she thinks herself, but for what she sees him suffer, so happy a being—her temper ap-

continual fever. One of my first objects has been to send to him the ablest surgeon in London; and after examining the wound, his report to me (you will be shocked to hear) was, that it must go through some further very severe operation, before it can in any respect be pronounced in a sound way of recovery. This personal calamity, therefore, is the chief thing now to be attended to: after which, some attempt must be made to remedy the wounds of his mind, by endeavouring to effect a reconciliation between the two families (his wife's and his own) which a runaway marriage have offended,—and by using every exertion to get him promoted in his regiment."—

"How providential," cried Adela, deeply interested by this detail, "has been his encounter with so judicious and zealous a friend!—But explain to me, Lord Ennerdale, the particulars of this marriage: when was it contracted? and who is his good and engaging young bride?"

"She is of a rank to render still more respectable the fortitude which, in such a reverse, she nobly evinces. Her father is a Baronet, driven by infirmities, the loss of

an only son, and some degree of singularity, to devote himself to a life of complete sequestration on his hereditary estate. During a visit—the first which she had ever been permitted to pay even to her nearest relations, she saw William Hampden, and for a short period, became an inmate of the same house with him. He was at that time in hourly expectation of being summoned to embark with the troops which he accompanied on foreign service: but though his head was filled with visions of martial distinctions, his heart was vacant for the admission of softer sentiments. He surrendered it at discretion to his fair conqueror, and after establishing with her the plan of a regular correspondence, parted from her at the conclusion of little more than a week, most desperately and passionately enamoured!"

"Why, the prompt courtship of Romeo and Juliet," cried Adela, smiling, "scarcely exceeds the haste to woo of this modern pair!"

"Oh, they were not altogether such slow-paced, deliberate people as *you*, I confess, can be expected to approve!—Their scale

of affection was not so nicely graduated: but prudence and circumspection never were terms admitted into William's vocabulary; neither, at sixteen, and just emancipated from the strictest seclusion, had they found any avenue to the mind of his ingenuous mistress.—I must not allow them to be laughed at!—Their love, though a little romantic, was sincere and disinterested; as a proof of which, behold them now, in all their adversity, still devotedly attached; and though reduced to live upon William's pay, too conscious of the repulse they merit, to entertain any thoughts of applying either to Dr. Hampden for assistance, or to the lady's father for pardon."

"And is it from a motive of such false pride, that William tortures the hearts of all his connections, by keeping them so long in ignorance of his fate? Oh, Lord Ennerdale, wean him from this unnatural infatuation: remonstrate with him on the selfishness of estranging himself from a family to which he is so dear, for the wrong-headed gratification of being able to say—'I renounce their love, because I require, yet disdain their aid!'"

"My sweet friend," resumed the Earl, "see him to-morrow, and urge all this to him yourself. From your lips, admonitions so just, and uttered with such generous fervour, must be irresistible! From mine, is there not some reason to apprehend, that he would regard them as officious and indelicate?"

"The probability that he might be guilty of such injustice," cried the candid Adela, "is now so apparent to me, that I am ashamed even to have proposed to you so thankless an office. But tell me, how long has he been returned from abroad, and when was he married?"

"I have not been able to exactly ascertain. I fancy about two months. His general health was less impaired on his first arrival, and his spirit of enterprize infinitely more active than it is at present. How he gained access to the willing partner of his flight, I have had no time to learn: but ere he had been landed three days, he repaired to the neighbourhood of her father's house—probably bribed to his interest some of the domestics—succeeded in carrying her off, and escaped all pursuit, precisely from the

circumstance of having previously escaped all suspicion; for his very existence was unknown to the Baronet till after the discovery (made many hours subsequent to the event) of his daughter's elopement."

"And is she," said Adela, "his only remaining child?"

"I believe she is; but not his only companion. His son's widow resides with him, and superintends his family."

"But though William declines making any attempt to negotiate a reconciliation, has not *she* sought to appease her offended father?"

"I understood that she had, but hitherto without avail."

"Oh, let her never renounce the endeavour! I speak with no reference to her mere worldly advantage—the loss of an inheritance is nothing, compared with the loss of a father's blessing and forgiveness!"

"I never," said Lord Ennerdale, touched by the unaffected feeling with which this was uttered, "conversed with any one whose genuine goodness of heart, and unfailing purity of principles might win more proselytes to rectitude than yours!—I should

be sorry to have a cause depending on your decision that was not strictly defensible! You would pronounce judgment against me, even were your own interest implicated in the sentence!"

Adela, flattered by this high compliment, looked up with a modest glow, to express her gratitude:—but, in an instant, the glow, and the grateful feelings by which it had been excited, gave place to a paleness almost death-like, and to a crowd of emotions productive of the most overwhelming consternation! Her assiduous neighbour observed the sudden change with equal wonder and alarm, and pursuing the direction which her eyes had taken, he beheld, on the opposite side of the room, yet in full view of the place where they sat, a gentleman, conspicuous for his height, and the dignity of his figure—no longer young, but eminently handsome—who, whilst his dark and piercing eyes were fixed upon the long unconscious, but now shrinking Adela, seemed to be listening to Jemima Cleveland, who stood beside him, and it was evident, by her occasional glances, was making the

Earl and her cousin the objects of her discourse.

CHAP. VIII.

REQUITAL.

To Lord Ennerdale, the mystery of Adela's sudden change of countenance was amply explained by the vision of the tall stranger. He lived too much in the world to be unacquainted with the person of Mr. Cleveland, though the confirmed antipathy between himself and Julius had precluded the slightest approach towards any species of intercourse with that young man's father.

It was, however, to the Earl, a matter of some surprise, (well as he was aware from the frank communications of Mr. Somerville, of Adela's total banishment from her paternal home during so long a period), that she should thus instantly recognize him in the midst of so numerous an assembly: but when he reflected upon the extraordinary family resemblance subsisting between Mr. Cleveland, his son, and the General, the

wonder ceased, and he readily admitted, that it was scarcely possible an observer who was interested in the scrutiny, could be mistaken in his identity.

Conscious that the dismay with which she found herself an object of such strict examination, was increased by his vicinity, Lord Ennerdale, ever attentive to her feelings, considerately arose, and sauntered in an indirect line towards the spot where Jemima was still volubly conversing with her uncle. She was insensible of his approach till he stood within two or three paces of her; when, instantly checking the rapid tide of her elocution, and colouring violently, she hastily turned aside her head, and affected not to see him.

Already but slenderly disposed to think well of her, this manifest embarrassment, amounting almost to a look of guilt, confirmed Lord Ennerdale in the belief that he had interrupted her in the prosecution of some malignant purpose. On perceiving him, the severe brow of Mr. Cleveland was contracted into a permanent frown; he regarded him for a moment with haughty

surprise, as if questioning by what right he adventured so immediately within the influence of his eye-shot—and then walked sternly away.

Lord Ennerdale, half smiling, now drew still nearer to Jemima, and standing so immediately opposite to her that she could no longer avoid looking at him, he quietly, but significantly said—

"Why do you deny all notice to a friend when he approaches you, whom, at a distance, you thought worthy to engage so much of your attention? Have you been reporting of me any evil, and are you apprehensive I should read your delinquency in your eyes?"

This frank and unexpected attack at first heightened the discomfiture of the amazed Jemima to an excess almost intolerable: but recovering in a few moments her wonted intrepidity, and glad of any opportunity of saying to him a civil thing, she answered, with great softness—

"I believe, my lord, you are pretty well convinced, that from me you have no delinquency to apprehend of the nature you

speak of. But, at all events, I am a gainer by your mistrust, since it has brought you to defend your character in person."

"It would go to my heart," replied he, bowing, yet regarding her with an air extremely incredulous, "to deny implicit credit to so flattering a speech: but the trite truism that *facts are stubborn things*, is not, you will allow, easy to be confuted: and what fact was ever plainer, than that, whilst you were conversing with Mr. Cleveland, he directed his observation with marked displeasure towards the place which I occupied. Whence arose that displeasure? And how came you, my avowed champion, to let it acquire such ascendency?"

There is nothing that more completely disconcerts the artful and treacherous than being dealt with so fearlessly and plainly. An insinuated suspicion may be evaded: but how repel a direct impeachment—an open and honourable application for honesty and candour?—Jemima never underwent greater perplexity in her life!—Every feature was in agitation—her very fingers

ends partook of the unconquerable embarrassment that overwhelmed her, and with nervous restlessness sought occupation in drawing her gloves on and off, or in adjusting the ornaments of her dress.—Lord Ennerdale beheld, but felt no pity for the confusion he had excited; and, after a short pause, thus went on—

"If Mr. Cleveland's obvious discontent was occasioned by viewing the indulgent attention with which his daughter did me the honour to listen to me, why should you have hesitated to assure him, from your perfect knowledge of my character, that I certainly was infusing into her mind no principles of filial rebellion—no perilous doctrine of any description?—That my discourse was, doubtless, as unprejudicial to *her* morals, as I am persuaded you have always found it to *yours*?—Why did you not vouch, on the testimony of my past, for my present, and future good behaviour? Do you think yourself the only young lady I would spare, were I inclined to hold dangerous language, or to offer up insidious incense?"

Much distressed what to answer, yet obliged, when he paused, to attempt saying something, Jemima stammered out—

"It was the first time my uncle had beheld Adela for many years, and—and, perhaps, the view of her, holding such ready and social conference with one known to be upon terms not—not very friendly with her brother, might give him—might dispose him, to feel some degree of anger."

"And would his anger extend to you, were he to observe our present dialogue?"

"No, I do not imagine it would."

"And why? Are not the associates encouraged by a niece, in high favour, of more importance to him, than those of a daughter whom he neglects and discards?"

"He cannot suppose, that whilst my own parents are living to direct me, I should much attend to the admonitions or prejudices of an uncle invested with no authority to controul me!"

"There seems to me but little difference in the privilege to assert her independency of a daughter so long denied all paternal protection, or of a niece so happily possessing it! But to speak very seriously. Be assur-

ed, and faithfully communicate what I am saying to Mr. Cleveland—that every time I am admitted to the society of the ladies of his family, I find the prevalence of their amiable qualities diffuses through my mind such a disposition to concord and reconciliation, that I am induced to look up to him with respect for being their parent—and to extend good-will even to his son, for bearing in his countenance so striking a resemblance to them."

Jemima tried to dress her face in smiles of approbation at this language, and was preparing a panegyrical answer, when Mrs. Erington came up, to say that their carriage had been called—

"And, do, my lord," added that lady, "spare me the trouble of collecting the rest "of the party. Go in quest of Barbara, "and of my sister."

He immediately obeyed the mandate. Barbara, he found in the midst of a dissertation on some controverted point in Sanchoniathon's Phœnician History with an old Scottish Antiquarian; and after waiting some time to let the debate conclude, proceeded with her towards the place occupied

by Adela, well pleased—(the awe which she had shewn of her father, considered)—that he was provided with a female companion to attend her across the room.

In silent, and deep dejection, Adela rose to comply with the long-wished-for summons. Mr. Somerville joined her before she reached her sister, and leaning on his arm, after they had all assembled, she was advancing with the rest towards the door, when Mrs. Erington suddenly stopped, exclaiming—

"I protest, there's my father!"

Adela had no courage to look up, but she heard Mrs. Erington the next moment, cheerfully and fearlessly address him: she heard him answering her in a tone of cordiality:—both her cousins ran up to him, to shake hands and bid him good-night;—and Mr. Somerville himself, disengaging from her his arm, deserted her to perform the same ceremony. The consciousness, that she alone was an interdicted, a rejected being amidst so many connections, none nearer in consanguinity than herself, totally overpowered her;—she burst into a passion

of tears, and flew towards the stairs to escape the more speedily from so cruel a trial!

Lord Ennerdale, quick as lightning followed her. His heart bled at sight of her uncontrolable distress: he whispered words of the softest consolation, and was drawing her arm within his own to conduct her to the carriage, when, gently disengaging herself, she found voice to say—

"I fear I am doing wrong to accept your kindness at such a moment. Do not be offended—do not think me ungrateful—but let me entreat that you will return into the concert-room."

"Ask me not to leave you, my beloved Adela;—I find it impossible! You are in sorrow;—if I cannot dispel, let me at least share your disquiet—and whatever heart denies you justice, oh, that you could find some solace from remembering, that in mine you reign almost to the exclusion of every other inmate!"

"I find in that conviction," said the weeping Adela, softened beyond the power of concealment, "the only consolation of which I could at this instant be susceptible.

Oh, Algernon! through life, how partial and how generous a friend have I ever found you!"

Transported by her kindness, he uttered, in a low voice, the most fervent acknowledgements—soothed, encouraged, and supported her, disarming of half its bitterness the anguish by which she was oppressed, and converting the tears hitherto drawn from her by affliction, to tears of thankfulness and sensibility.

Mr. Somerville and the ladies, at length joined them, and they all descended to the carriage. Lord Ennerdale placed Adela within it, and then, followed by her secret blessings, took his leave.

During the whole way home, she never spoke a word. Her heart was oppressed, and her eyes were every moment ready to overflow. But Jemima, though she imagined that it might be somewhat hazardous, in the presence of Mr. Somerville, to torment Adela with remarks on her exit from the concert-room, had not resolution to forbear animadverting on the long dialogue which she had held with Lord Ennerdale in

the recess of the window. Mrs. Erington, self-persuaded of her sister's *invulnerability*, as she termed it, laughed at these insinuations; whilst Mr. Somerville, too fervently wished that the attachment which they implied might be real, to feel any disposition to controvert them. Thus left to her own disquieting suggestions — incensed against Lord Ennerdale—doubtful what steps would be pursued by Mr. Cleveland—enraged by the passive silence of her detested rival, Jemima grew sullen, disdained to speak, even when asked a question, and quitted the carriage at her father's door, in a frame of mind which the bitterest of her ill-wishers might have felt some disposition to commiserate.

Adela was rejoiced that Mrs. Somerville, by having retired before their return, was spared the uneasiness of beholding the disturbed and harassed looks with which she reached Cumberland Place. But the next morning, she held with her a long and confidential dialogue, in the course of which, she fully confided to her all the mortifying particulars which she had overheard respecting Lady Rosalvan's marriage—and all the

grief and consternation with which the chilling, and apparently resentful observation of her father, had struck her heart.

The kind and zealous Elinor most warmly entered into every feeling that she expressed. Her terror lest the disapproving aspect of Mr. Cleveland, should induce Adela to repulse Lord Ennerdale with renewed and more than former coldness, was extreme. She supplicated her to guard against the encroachments of timidity; averred, in the most positive terms, her full conviction that the addresses of Lord Ennerdale, if encouraged by herself, would never be rejected by her father; and, with all the energy of anxious affection, exhorted her, under domestic circumstances in many respects so distressing, not to throw away the power of securing a protector so honourable—so every way entitled to her confidence and attachment.

The secret of Adela rose to her lips, and embracing Mrs. Somerville, on whose shoulder she sought to hide her glowing cheeks—

"Oh Elinor!" exclaimed she, in a voice scarcely audible, "I last night endured, in

their fullest degree, the opposite extremes of happiness and sorrow!"

She was proceeding—but the entrance, at that moment, of Mr. Somerville, drove back to the recesses of her own heart, the confession that was irresistibly escaping her.—Her sister looked all impatience for a fuller explanation; but Adela whispering to her an earnest supplication to be silent, she made a painful effort to suspend all enquiry till they should once again be left to themselves.

Having answered Mr. Somerville's enquiries after her health, and satisfied him that she was perfectly recovered from the indisposition of the preceding night, Adela entreated him to accompany her to the lodgings of William Hampden and his pretty bride. It was a visit which she felt reluctant to pay with any of the *pomp and circumstance* of equipage and servants; and Mr. Somerville, ever ready to oblige her, consented with alacrity to be her escort.

On arriving at a small house in Dorset Street, the lower part of which was occupied by the proprietors of a very scantily-furnished haberdasher's shop, having knocked repeat-

edly without effect at the private door, Adela and her companion were compelled to enter the shop and ask within it, whether Mrs. Hampden was at home.

A pert, laconic answer, implying that she did not know, was muttered to this question by a true tawdry Londoner, a girl vulgarly fashionable, who came forth from a little back parlour, stared boldly at the two inquirers, and seemed much inclined, from no ostensible cause, to treat them with impertinence.

"Will you have the goodness," said Adela, "to endeavour to find out whether we can be received?"

"We have nothing at all to do with our lodgers," cried the repulsive young lady; "there's a private door which you may go round to."

"The private door," said the good humoured Somerville, "is also a silent door; we have knocked at it several times, and nobody has answered us."

"I suppose the servant girl is out. Well, then, you may go up stairs through the shop. You must tap at the first door you come to

on your left; that's the room where they generally sit."

Adela approved this measure for Mr. Somerville, but objected to it for herself.

"I had rather not go up," said she, "till quite certain that my visit is well timed. Mrs. Hampden may be engaged—she may not like being thus taken by surprise: do you precede me, therefore, my dear brother, and if you find her disposed to receive us both, come and let me know.—I shall be here making a few purchases."

This declaration she hoped, would ensure her some civility—and Somerville entertaining the same expectation, left her.

Soon after his departure, a man extremely well dressed, but whose air, confident and presuming, was calculated to excite reserve, unexpectedly issued forth from the same little back room whence the young apprentice had made her appearance, and stationing himself behind the counter, snatched up a roll of ribbon, and smirking facetiously at Adela, begged to have the sole honour of measuring it for her—

"So pretty a customer," he added,

"should not be waited upon by an insensible female!—I shall be proud, Ma'am, to serve you—whether, for the rarity of the thing, you pay ready money, or, as most ladies do, *go tick.*"

Disgusted by the man's familiarity, but concluding that he belonged to the shop, Adela coldly answered—

"As my business, Sir, is nearly over, I shall have no occasion to trouble you."

"Trouble, beauteous lady! ah, be assured, you can inflict upon me no trouble but by refusing my humble services. I am a novice, fairest lady, in the art of recommending purchases, but, when near you, every thing recommends itself. See how well this colour suits, and, if possible, sets off, the dazzling brilliancy of your complexion;—try but, on those delicate hands, the elastic texture of these gloves;—behold this wreath —"*its flowers less blooming than your face,*" sue to approach that charming brow:—ah, there let it rest, for there—"*it ne'er will withered be!*"

Amazed, angry, and almost frightened, Adela drew back, saying with all the haughtiness she could assume—

"I am not here without protection, Sir, and if you address to me such strange discourse any longer, you will oblige me to call down the gentleman with whom I came."

"Call, fair barbarian!—Nay, if thou wilt, call even

——'*Spirits from the vasty deep!*
'*But will they* COME *when you do call for them?*'

"This is quite intolerable!" cried she, advancing a few steps towards the door which led to the staircase: but the man, darting from behind the counter, and intercepting her progress, flung himself theatrically before her upon one knee, and in a whining tone of mock humility, called out—

'*Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have*
'*Some patient leisure to excuse myself.*'

Adela now seriously alarmed, as well as insufferably provoked, regarded him a moment with a mixture of indignation and wonder, and then said—

"I am totally at a loss to understand on what pretence you think yourself authorised to treat me in so extraordinary a manner.—Be assured, Sir, that such conduct will not

fail to be resented as it ought by those with whom I am connected."

The girl behind the counter, at these words, no longer confining herself to a silent simper, laughed audibly; and Adela's incorrigible tormentor, nothing daunted by the rebuke which he had received, burst forth into fresh heroics, and gazing at her with real or pretended admiration, exclaimed—

'Oh, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
'In the contempt and anger of that eye!'

Reflecting, with increasing dismay, upon the conduct of this man's impertinent female associate, as well as upon the insolence of his own, the frightful idea now occurred to Adela, that she had incautiously exposed herself to insult in a house of ill-repute! The thought no sooner struck her, than turning hastily round, she seized upon the lock of the street-door, and was impatiently endeavouring to open it, intending to ruff out of the shop, when the stranger springing forward, arrested her efforts, grasped her hand, and with undiminished effrontery, smiling in her face, cried—

'Oh, fairest beauty, do not fear or fly;
'Stay—for I have no power to let thee pass;
'My hand would free thee, but my heart says—no.'

Trembling, and sick with terror, yet anxious not to desert herself, Adela, with quivering lips, but affected courage, said—

"I *insist* upon being immediately suffered to pass! I could not have believed, that in a house of apparent respectability, and in the presence of a young woman whose own interest ought to render her desirous of behaving with propriety to those who enter her shop, I incurred any risk of being molested in so unpardonable a manner!"

'*Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst!*' resumed the impenetrable stranger—"those lips, so fresh, so rosy, and so youthful, were made—'*For kissing, lady, not for such contempt!*'"

The free look with which these words were quoted, corresponded so alarmingly with the freedom of their meaning, that Adela, growing desperate of escaping personal indignity, unless she made some vigorous effort for her own liberation, suddenly

and dexterously pushed him aside, and turning the lock with the rapidity of thought, darted into the street.

The man, half laughing, half enraged, rushed after her. She heard his odious voice, his dreaded step close behind her—and flying impetuously forward, she scarcely knew whither, had nearly attained the end of the street, when impeded by the extended arm of some person, whom, in her rapid course, she had, unconsciously, almost run up against—

"Let me pass—let me pass!" cried she, wildly endeavouring to insinuate her slender form between this new interrupter and the rails of a house near which he had stopt—"I am pursued—I *must* get away—I *must* run on!"

"Pursued!" repeated a well-known voice that instantly brought comfort to her heart—"By whom? — Wherefore? — Look at me, dearest Adela—look at me, and dismiss these fears!—Can you distrust," added he, with a smile, "the valour of a champion so interested in protecting the treasure he holds dearest upon earth!"

"Oh, no, no;—I feel that I am safe—I

feel delighted at this meeting!" cried she, panting for breath, but recovering to a full sense of security—

"I am most happy to hear you say so," resumed Lord Ennerdale—"take my arm, and let me have the pleasure of attending you wherever you purpose to go."

Adela looked round, to ascertain what was become of her recent persecutor. He had stopt short on seeing her detained and addressed by a gentleman who appeared to know her, and now stood still at some little distance, as if waiting to observe how the interview would terminate.

"As I have found so good a defender," said she, at length, "I feel no scruple in going back to the house whence I this moment fled. But promise me," she added, "to enter into no altercation with the person who alarmed me. Be my guardian from future disturbance, but not the avenger of that which is past."

"Yet, tell me, of what nature was that disturbance? Who inflicted it? Was it the man whom I see watching us from yonder crossing?"

"Trouble not yourself about that man,

or any other man!" cried Adela, hastily taking his offered arm, "come with me, and remember, that you are not to lose sight of me an instant!"

"Oh, that *you* would remember," exclaimed he, pressing the hand which rested upon his arm, "never to withdraw so grateful, and so sweet a charge!"

They now walked on, and as they proceeded, Adela, whose thoughts were full of her recent adventure, said, "can you explain to me, by what infatuation William Hampden chuses to reside in lodgings so every way improper for his young wife?"

"Do you mean on account of their obscurity? Ah, my lovely friend, to one in William's circumstances, that would be their principal recommendation."

Adela now explained herself, and stated that there seemed some reason to distrust the good character of the people of the house.

"You must surely be mistaken," cried Lord Ennerdale, much surprised, "I yesterday saw the mistress of this little mansion, and she appeared to me a perfectly creditable and inoffensive person. What

reason have you had to judge of her otherwise?"

Perceiving that the man who had so insufferably molested her was gone completely out of sight, Adela ventured to recount the whole of her adventure, and was listened to with an indignation and amazement not to be described!

After assuring her, however, that the young woman who had abetted the stranger's impertinence with such callous derision, was not the proprietor of the shop, but the daughter or niece of the person who kept it, the Earl added—

"Why, my too cautious Adela, did you defer the relation of this tale till the man whose insolence so loudly called for chastisement had disappeared? You cannot suppose, that with so contemptible an adversary, I should have made of this what is called an affair of honour?—The only thing to have done with him, would have been to have broken a switch across his shoulders!"

"And whilst that amusing operation was performing," said Adela, "you would have left me standing in the street, as spectatress of the sport?"

Lord Ennerdale laughed, but assured her, that he would have provided for her the best accommodations to witness the transaction, which, on such short notice he could have obtained.

They were now arrived at the door of the shop, and on entering it, perceived Mr. Somerville, red with anger, vehemently interrogating the young woman on the subject of the lady he had brought with him.

The girl, though still inveterately pert, seemed half frightened, and whilst strenuously disclaiming all knowledge of the lady's motive for so abruptly departing, repeatedly declared, that for any advantage gained by her as a customer, she might as well never have entered the shop.

"Here are all the things," continued she, "which she pretended to buy, still lying unpaid for on the counter; and, I suppose, the pleasure of selling them as remnants, is the only reward I shall have for my trouble."

"But did she leave for me no message? Did she go away alone, and on foot?"

"She went away with a gentleman," said the girl, spitefully enjoying his perplexity,

"I can tell you no more about her, if you was to make ever such a rout!"

"Girl, girl," exclaimed Mr. Somerville, extremely irritated—"it is more probable that your insolence drove her away in disgust—perhaps in fear! You deserve the severest reprehension for the gross incivility of your behaviour from the instant we entered your paltry shop; and it would be doing you no more than justice, publicly to expose your misconduct in the newspapers!"

The appearance, at that moment, of Adela herself, put an end to the menaces, but too justly incurred, which the angry Somerville was pouring forth. He flew towards her, and the young woman, not much elated on seeing her return, slunk into the little parlour, and left the shop clear to its unwelcome occupiers.

Adela eagerly enquired what had detained her brother-in-law so long in William Hampden's apartment?

After congratulating himself on beholding her so safely escorted, he answered—

"At the moment I went up, the poor fellow was preparing to undergo, from his

new surgeon, a minute examination of his ill-healed arm. Of course, I concluded on hearing this, that it would be proper to take an immediate leave: but Mrs. Hampden, pale and trembling, supplicated me to remain a few minutes in the adjoining room. Her maid, she told me, had unfortunately been sent out on a distant errand; the mistress of the house was likewise absent, and if her husband should faint under the practitioner's hands, she distrusted her own ability to administer to his recovery as she ought.—She therefore implored me to grant her the consolation of knowing that there was at least one human being near her who felt for her poor William's sufferings, and who would enable her to support her own terrors with more resolution.—What could I oppose to such a request? In truth, I had no heart to resist its urgency a moment. Yet, deeming the immediate vicinity of a chamber of such anguish, an unfit spot for my kind Adela, I rather chose to leave her, somewhat longer than she might expect or wish, to her own conjectures, than expose her to grieve and tremble with the affrighted Mrs. Hampden."

"Oh, you decided most considerately and wisely!" cried Adela.—"But how did our unfortunate William endure the surgeon's scrutiny?"

"With the most manly fortitude of mind, but—debilitated as is the state of his frame—the most alarming and frequent symptoms of bodily exhaustion. The inspection was peculiarly severe; I was forced to issue from my retreat, and to exert myself at once to revive the drooping wife, and to sustain the half-expiring husband. It was a scene the most trying I ever encountered; yet, shall I always rejoice that I so opportunely presented myself where my services appeared so acceptable, and where two such interesting creatures seemed so totally abandoned in the hour of trial to their own worn-out strength. The surgeon, when this first painful duty was over, spoke with cheerfulness of his patient's speedy prospect of entire recovery; and gave the languid young man the highest credit for his noble endurance of the torture to which he had been obliged to put him."

"It was my intention in coming hither," said Lord Ennerdale, "to have asked for

admission to the invalid: but perhaps, after all he has undergone, it may be better to leave him to repose."

"I am decidedly of that opinion," cried Mr. Somerville—"to-morrow is the soonest that he will be capable of conversing with any ease."

"Then let us hasten away," said Adela; —"We are keeping possession of a place where we may be called upon, by some straggling customer, to weigh out pins, and measure laces. Which of you two gentlemen would make the most adroit man-milliner?"

"To a lover of good bargains," cried Mr. Somerville, "I should indubitably prove much the most acceptable person to deal with;—since, without an instant's hesitation, I would dispose of the whole stock in trade, here collected, and of the young lady at its head, precisely for their genuine value—that is to say—for nothing!"

Whilst he was yet speaking, the real owner of the shop, the person of whom Lord Ennerdale had made such favourable mention, came in, loaded with bandboxes

and parcels, but smiling and civil, though evidently much fatigued.

The Earl, perceiving that she mistook them for purchasers, and was getting ready, with no little speed and bustle, to serve them, hastened to undeceive her. He told her they were friends of Mr. and Mrs. Hampden; informed her of the trying operation which the former had just gone through, and recommending that the house should be kept as quiet as possible for the rest of the day, said that he felt assured she would render every service in her power to her youthful tenants during a period of such suffering—

"That I will indeed, Sir;" cried the good woman, with promptness—"my heart has ached for them many a time, poor souls, since they first came into this house! And I hope they have always found themselves treated with proper respect. They are as good lodgers as ever I had in my life; as punctual as the day in their payments, and as quiet as mice."

"They speak with infinite gratitude of your attention...."

"But here is a lady," interrupted Mr. Somerville, "who has by no means the same reason to speak favourably of the civility of your young shop-woman."

Adela would now have interfered to prevent the accusation he was about to make; but Lord Ennerdale besought her not to oppose his purpose, and even joined in the censure which her brother-in-law had begun—

"It is reciprocally the interest of seller and buyer," said he, "that good manners as well as good measure should be dealt between them. A little lesson to this effect, could it be duly impressed, might produce some reformation in the impolitic assistant, who, by her rudeness, drives away those whom the civility of her principal would attract."

He then recounted as much of the scene which had passed in her shop, as was sufficient to convince its mistress of the justice of his expostulation.

"Ah, lord, Sir," cried she, as soon as he had ended, "its all along of the airs my crazy nephew puts into her head, that the girl behaved so unbecomingly. Here, Nan-

cy," added she, calling in great wrath to the shrinking culprit, "come and ask pardon of this lady for your impertinence! Come this moment, you young torment!"

Slowly and reluctantly the crest-fallen damsel emerged from her lurking-place, and her angry employer then went on—

"I warrant, Norris has been here again this morning!—He'll bring you to ruin, girl, and me to distraction!—You were idle and perverse enough in all conscience before he came, and I wish with all my heart, he had never found his way to the house! Speak, statue! Wasn't it him who treated this lady so rudely whilst you stood by and laughed? Shame on you! Is this the way to bring a good name to the shop? Is this the way to gain friends and credit in the world?"

The name of Norris struck a chill to the heart of Adela, and filled her with dismay. She took hold of Mr. Somerville's arm, and drawing him towards the door, said—

"Let us go—let us go, my dear brother!—I have heard enough upon so disagreeable a subject."

"Well, but Ma'am," resumed the wo-

man, anxiously following her, "I hope you don't go away quite lastingly affronted! I assure you I am exceedingly ashamed and sorry for what has passed. But, dear me, ma'am, how could I help it?—Here's my nephew, a wild, foolish chap, newly married to a fine quality widow, a Lady Somebody, whose head he turned by his nonsensical poetry and stuff;—and she leaves him master of his time and money to come up and play the deuce here in London;—and somehow, he ferreted me out, (I was his father's sister) and he spends half the day in talking a pack of rubbish to this vain girl, whilst I am forced to be trudging about the town, waiting upon my customers. And, bless you, ma'am, how is it to be wondered at, he should be listened to by such a poor ignorant thing, when he has had the art to wheedle himself into favour with an accomplished, clever lady, like the one he persuaded to marry him?—I am sure I never was so surprised in all my whole life, as when I first heard that Bob had raised himself to such preferment;—for though he has tried a little of every thing, I must own, that I never thought he

would find the means of trying the life of a gentleman!—Dear, I wish I could think of his lady's name!—Can't you recollect it, girl?"

"Yes," answered the malicious personage thus unfortunately applied to—"her name is Rosalvan,—and that young lady is her daughter;—Mr. Norris knew her the moment she came into the shop."—

Adela, at these words, hiding her face in her handkerchief, fled into the street with as much precipitation as when pursued by Norris himself. Mr. Somerville and the Earl, exceedingly concerned, instantly hurried after. The latter gently drew her arm within his own, and for some time, they all walked on in silence.

At length, Adela, uncovering her streaming eyes, said in an accent the most dejected—

"Oh, Lord Ennerdale—am I—thus degradingly connected,—am I worthy to be the object of your choice?"

"You are worthy," cried he, with an enthusiasm wholly irrepressible, "to be the chosen mistress of an empire!—Whatever I hear, whatever I behold, of a nature

to give you unmerited pain, serves but to increase my impatience to hasten the time, when it may become my province to secure you from a recurrence of such harassing trials!—Adela—dearest Adela—I must speak unreservedly to Mrs. Somerville this very day—I must solicit the exertion of her influence over your father, to procure for me the blessing of speedily calling you mine for ever!"

"What a moment," cried the agitated Adela, "to make so generous a proposal!—Oh, think of this hateful alliance formed by my unhappy mother! Think of the disgrace which it reflects upon me!—Wherever I go, allusions to her disastrous story, haunt and distress me. My father, by appearing to disown me, casts a stigma upon my birth—my title to the name I bear is questioned—I have no appropriate rank in society—I am a rejected, unvalued being, who can bring into no family either honour, wealth, or even the negative advantage of an undisputed descent!"

She had spoken in so unguarded a tone that Mr. Somerville, who unavoidably overheard the substance of all she said, w—

preparing with great earnestness to answer her, when Lord Ennerdale anticipated him, and warmly replied—

"What are all these accidental circumstances of your situation to me?—You still are Adela—the Adela I love as my own soul! On whom I rest my fondest hopes of happiness through life!—I married once with every promise of earthly prosperity held out to my view. Birth, fortune, interest, and splendid connections, made of the union into which I then entered the most brilliant I could have contracted. What did these vain accessaries to felicity produce?—It is not for me to tell you, Adela, how futile, how insufficient I found them to ensure even resignation!—Ah, now—at a maturer period of my existence, let me form an engagement dictated solely by the affections of my heart!—Let me chuse a friend, a companion on whom I can rely for every social, every endearing quality:—one who will be a protectress to my children, and the ornament and delight of their father's blissful home!"

"Can you, Adela," cried Mr. Somerville, who had rapturously attended to this

speech, "can you resist so eloquent a pleader?"

"Rather ask me," she blushing, yet frankly, answered, "how I shall subdue my own repinings, should such pleadings be resisted by my father!"

"He cannot,—he will not be so great an enemy to you, and to us all!—We will unite in our application to him,—we will allow him no peace, no respite till his consent is obtained!—My good little Adela, dismiss these vain apprehensions: be confident, be cheerful, for this match *must* take place!—I shall lose my senses if it fails!"

"Are they not," said Adela, half smiling, "a little gone astray already?"

"Oh, be as saucy as you will—say any thing to me—do any thing with me—I allow and forgive it all, on condition you allow me, six weeks hence, to give you joy as Lady Ennerdale!"

The Earl, delighted at his cordial friendliness, thanked him in the most animated terms; and then Mr. Somerville, no longer able to suppress his curiosity, said,

"When was it, Ennerdale, that you were fortunate enough to prevail on this fair

paragon of female discretion to acknowledge, that she had a heart?"

"Its capture," cried he, gaily, "except by presumptive evidence, I have not even yet obtained assurance of!—But when a man is permitted, unreproved, to talk of his love, it is seldom, I suspect, for the gratification of any other feeling than vanity, that he is very hasty and importunate in soliciting a formal avowal of reciprocal tenderness. Adela heard me declare the sentiments she had inspired, with so much sweetness, that she put to flight all terror of her disapproval; and I have been too grateful and happy to ask for more."

CHAP. IX.

PROHIBITION.

They were now arrived at Mr. Somerville's door, which was no sooner opened, than that gentleman, hastily preceding his two companions, ran up into the drawing-room, impatient to communicate to his wife the discovery he had just made of the good understanding subsisting between Adela and

the Earl. He found her, as he wished, alone: but in evident dejection, and with eyes which betrayed that she had recently been in tears.

Before she could reply to his alarmed interrogations, Lord Ennerdale and her sister entered.

An explanation now took place, the most unpleasant to all parties.

Mrs. Somerville, in the absence of her husband and Adela, had received a letter from her father; she pointed to it with looks of deep concern, and desiring them to read it, drew Lord Ennerdale to a window, to inform him of as much of its contents, as she thought it necessary that he should know.

Mr. Cleveland began by saying, that he concluded it was needless to state his reasons for not calling in Cumberland Place: they were such as Mrs. Somerville might easily conjecture. He congratulated her, however, on the birth of her son, and expressed his good wishes, with something approaching to paternal affection, for both mother and child.

He next adverted to the information

which he had received of the assiduous visits at her house of Lord Ennerdale, and of the admiration which he was reported to evince for her youngest sister. With the former part of this intelligence, he admitted that he had nothing to do: she and Mr. Somerville were, of course, at liberty to receive, as often as it suited them, whoever they pleased: but, with the latter part of the communication, he acknowledged himself much dissatisfied. He had, the preceding evening, witnessed enough, to amply convince him, that the intercourse he alluded to was of no accidental or unmeaning nature; and he now wrote to express his decided and unalterable condemnation of the intimacy which he had seen so unequivocally manifested. He proceeded to pronounce, that Adela must give no further countenance to the attentions of a man from whom he was so entirely averse; she must abandon all idea of accompanying Mr. and Mrs. Somerville into Northumberland—into the neighbourhood of Mossington Castle; and if, whilst the Earl yet remained in town, that lady and gentleman chose, as usual, to admit him daily, it

was his especial desire that their young guest should return immediately to the abode of Dr. Hampden. This decision, he added, was not to be shaken; and as the present was the first instance of his interference in her sister's concerns, he begged it might be the last time he should have occasion to speak upon so unpleasant a subject.

At the end of this peremptory mandate, was subjoined an invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Somerville and Alicia, to dine with him the first day they were all disengaged.

Adela, though not, perhaps, the most surprised of any present at a letter so every way cruel, was completely thrown off her guard by its perusal, and (her spirits already harassed by the incidents of the morning) had no sooner finished it, than a deep sigh forced its way from her heart, and a shower of tears gushed from her eyes.

Lord Essendale flew to her. At once elated and depressed on beholding an affliction so flattering to him as a lover, so painful as a friend, he took her hand, and pressed it with fondness, though in silence to his heart.

Mrs. Somerville, in the midst of her own

disquietude, seemed surprised at the passive sanction which her sister gave to a freedom so new in Lord Ennerdale, and so little according with the general reserve that had subsisted between them—

Her husband read the sentiments which her looks expressed, and hastily cried out—"My dear Elinor, she loves him! An explanation has, at length, taken place, and she does all the justice to her old friend Algernon, that we so long have wished! But is it not a circumstance of peculiar infelicity, that at this very juncture a prohibition so stern should arrive to harass and perplex them?"

Mrs. Somerville embraced her sister with an air of mingled pity and congratulation, saying—"Shall I complain, dearest girl, of the reserve with which you have treated me? Or shall I indulge myself in owning, how sincerely I admire the wisdom and self-command which you have so happily known how to blend with such unsuspected sensibility?"

Then addressing the Earl, she added—"I have told you enough, Lord Ennerdale, of this distressing letter, to entitle me to your opinion how to answer it. Need I

declare how sincerely it grieves me? Or how joyfully I would pursue any measure likely to procure a repeal of the interdiction it contains?"

Lord Ennerdale paused for some seconds —looked agitated and irresolute, and, at length, answered—

"Let me but obtain the permission of Adela to act as if this letter had never been received, and I will yet venture to hope, that something auspicious may be effected by an immediate application to Mr. Cleveland, from myself, either in person or in writing. *You* shall decide, dear Mrs. Somerville, which method it will be wisest to adopt."

"In this case," cried her husband, earnestly, "be advised, Ennerdale, by *me*. Seek no interview. Mr. Cleveland is austere, and difficult to conciliate. An answer to your proposals (even favourable) might not be very graciously accorded—a definitive rejection would probably be accompanied by such harshness as you would find it very painful to bear."

Adela now raising her tearful eyes, and looking at Lord Ennerdale, said—"ought I not to exhort you to renounce so hopeless a

pursuit? Is it pardonable—is it generous in me, to suffer you to expose yourself to so probable a chance of incurring a repulsive failure?"

"It is at least not generous, beloved Adela, to hold to me such language! You should rather encourage by approbation the step I am about to take. From *your* father, I can endure much:—fear nothing from our correspondence, whether it be verbal or written. The reward I have in view will stimulate me to an exertion at once of patience, of urgency, which no coldness, no rebuff, at the outset of the negociation, shall induce me to suspend. Look smilingly, then, my Adela, on the enterprise,—bid me depart, and prosper,—and all will—all must end well."

She made a faint effort to regard him with a more cheering aspect, and giving him her hand, answered—

"I little merit that you should undertake for me such a task: but, as you bid me, I will say;—Go, and may success attend you!"

"The purest blessing of Heaven reward you for the kindness of that little sentence! My heart's dear Adela, farewel!—Fare-

wel, my ever-friendly, Mrs. Somerville.—You shall hear from me shortly.—Write not, speak not, take not any step in the affair till you see me."

Then, hastily shaking hands with Mr. Somerville, he snatched up his hat, and ran out of the house.

A general silence for some minutes succeeded his departure. Adela was the first to speak—

"I could not bear," said she, despondingly, "to appear insensible of his generous eagerness: but I have a strong internal conviction, in defiance of his sanguine prognostics, that all this will end unhappily!"

"I trust not, my dearest sister," cried Mrs. Somerville, anxious to revive and give her confidence,—"Recollect how favourable a circumstance is the absence from town at this critical moment of the irreconcileable Julius. It leaves my father at liberty to attend more impartially to the voice of reason; and will give us all more opportunity to back Lord Ennerdale's cause with the zeal which it deserves. Dearest Adela—submit not without some effort!—I recommend not—Heaven forbid I should—daring opposi-

tion, and open defiance:—but beware of being too yielding—too easily panic-struck.—And above all, my sweet sister, let nothing induce you to utter any rash promises of unconditional and perpetual renunciation. Time conquers all difficulties.—Prejudices may relent—animosity may subside—pride may be softened—every thing, in short may be vanquished but the obligations imposed by solemn, though unguarded vows."

To these friendly exhortations, Adela was unprovided with any answer. She entertained higher notions of paternal authority than many, perhaps, who have been from infancy habituated to live under its controul. All that related to the reciprocal obligations of parent and child, she considered with a species of solemn reverence which gave to the subject peculiar power over her imagination. An altercation with her brother might have concerned, yet (violent as she knew he could be) would have had not the smallest effect over her sentiments and actions. But to resist the positive behests of a father!—Adela recoiled with affright from the mere idea:—she knew that her courage would be unequal to performing such a part

—and she felt that her principles ought to oppose even the very wish that her courage were greater!—Yet, without a struggle, to renounce Lord Ennerdale;—to suffer the prospects of her whole life to be tinged with gloom and hopelessness;—and to repay with cold and heartless timidity the disinterested attachment she had inspired!—The alternative between such a mode of conduct, and the disobedience which its reverse would demand, was truly dreadful to her: and never were hours so apprehensively and painfully spent, as those that intervened between the earl's departure, and the moment when he again, on the following day, made his appearance.

She was alone to receive him, Mrs. Somerville having just left her, and Alicia, who was a tardy riser, not being yet descended from her room.

His aspect, as he approached her, told, without words, a tale of the blankest disappointment, and the severest mortification. Adela's heart sunk at the sight; she had no voice to utter a single enquiry:—dismayed, pale, motionless, she looked at him in silent sorrow—and her foreboding fears whispered

—"He comes to tell me, we are for ever parted!"

Lord Emerdale, who after precipitately advancing towards her on first coming in, had abruptly turned away, and paced the apartment in disordered haste, incapable of announcing the tidings he brought, now again drew near her, and mournfully said—

"I am despotically, and vindictively rejected, my Adela!—Your father—your implacable father, refuses me all sanction,—robs me of all hope!—Oh, that I had never risked your happiness by a perseverance in those assiduities which have gained me a place in the heart I am now compelled to forfeit!—Adela—sweetest Adela, if I have made you too deep a participator in my wretchedness, how shall I ever forgive myself!"

"Think not of me," cried she, in a voice of kindness, whilst vainly endeavouring to restrain her tears—"think only how best to support your own share in this heavy blow. I ought not so long to have accepted your attentions;—their motive I will not deny, was often suspected by me. It was inconsiderate, it was cruel to permit them, distrust-

ful as I have ever been of my dreaded father's sentence."

"Adela," resumed the Earl, sitting down beside her, "for worlds would I not propose to you an act of filial defiance—a breach of positive duty!—But, my own love, there is a promise which, if you refuse to give, you will drive me to desperation!"

"Explain yourself," cried she: "it revives me to hear, that there is any thing which I can do, consistently with my obligations as a daughter, capable of soothing your regret."

"Oh, Adela!" exclaimed he, "this exquisite kindness at once softens and aggravates all I suffer!—Yet, do not withdraw it—do not think me so mad as to misprize it—so wayward as to demand severity and coldness! Oh, no,—I could not now bear from you a look, an accent, a single expression of harshness or insensibility!—But, adored Adela—hear my supplication:—It is, that you condemn me not to the misery of apprehending, that by absence and silence I may be driven from your remembrance. Pledge to me here your solemn faith to accept no other proposals during the space of

a year from the present moment — and wherever you may be, permit my writing to you, and engage to answer my letters."

"The first of these requests, I unhesitatingly comply with: the second, you must allow me time, a little time, to deliberate upon. Do not look hurt," added she, seeing him change countenance at her irresolution; "I have no motive for refusing an immediate assent to your wishes, which is not as much the result of consideration for your peace as for my own. If, finally, we *must* part, why should I add to the anguish of that parting by maintaining a correspondence so calculated to enfeeble our courage, and to nourish deceitful hopes?—Besides—I may, on this head, receive a formal prohibition, and in that case, how shall I bear to forego an indulgence—for such I have no scruple in owning it would be to me—which habit would have rendered so essential to my repose?"

"This calm and frigid reasoning, Adela, dismays me! Have I deluded myself in trusting too implicitly to your love?—Your countenance, full of sympathy and softness, divests me of every doubt;—the happy self-

possession with which, at a moment like the present, you can foresee every difficulty, and anticipate every objection, confounds and distracts me! Accuse me not of inconsistency; I thought indeed, that to contribute to your unhappiness would heighten all my own;—but I now experience, that to suffer singly, would surpass in misery every other possible degree of torment!—Adela, take pity on my feelings; shew less fortitude in resigning me, or I shall be possessed of none!"

Adela looked up with a forced and melancholy smile, and said—"If your fortitude is to be proportioned to my weakness, heroic indeed will it be! Fear not that I shall be too enviably exempted from all share of pain.—This blow, though perhaps it comes upon me with more preparation than upon you, strikes me with but little less severity.—We are all too prone to flatter ourselves that what we anxiously wish, however improbable its realization, may, by some unforeseen and mysterious means, be attainable. From the moment my—vanity must I call it?—taught me to discern your attachment, I have been wavering between hope

and fear as to its result;—hope, however, preponderated. I thought that, independent of the gratification to my father's ambition of receiving for me such honourable proposals, his too well known repugnance to me would induce him to rejoice at being thus permanently released from the burthen of bestowing upon me any future care.—My expectations, in both cases, have been deceived—and amply do I now pay the penalty of having ever ventured to indulge them."

Struck and penetrated by the sensibility which this speech so ingenuously evinced, Lord Ennerdale poured forth his acknowledgments in the most impassioned terms, and supplicated her pardon for the distrust he had so ungratefully presumed to manifest: and Adela, still seeking by the gentlest exepressions to sooth his disturbance, ventured to ask for some particulars of what had passed with her father.

The Earl, with as much calmness as he could command, then informed her, that immediately on quitting her the preceding day, he had hastened home to compose such a letter to Mr. Cleveland as he deemed

might insure a reception the least unfavourable, and call forth an answer most consonant to his fervent wishes. He waved communicating to his anxious auditress the entire purport of this letter—the liberality of his proposals with regard to settlements, and the perfectly disinterested indifference which it manifested relative to the fortune that Mr. Cleveland might think proper to bestow with his daughter's hand:—but, on the respect and earnestness with which he had written, he enlarged more amply; and Adela, as she listened to him, sighed, and wondered that to such intercessions her father could remain inexorable!

"This letter, my Adela," pursued he,—"on the fate of which so large a portion of my future happiness or wretchedness depended, I dispatched, with a throbbing heart, about an hour after I left you, ordering the servant, when he delivered it, to enquire whether Mr. Cleveland was at home, but, at all events, not to wait for any answer. He brought me word that your father dismounted at his own door, after his morning ride, just as my letter was put into the porter's hands.

"I was engaged," continued he, "to dine with Annesley and a party of men at the Thatched House: but so miserably anxious and unhinged was my mind, that the effort of going out, and of affecting undisturbed ease, surpassed my ability, and I sent to Portman Square a tardy and brief excuse.—I should but ill succeed, were I to attempt describing to you my feelings throughout the lingering remains of this intolerable day. Alone—unemployed—restlessly wandering from place to place—in momentary expectation of some sort of answer from your father, I listened with intense earnestness to every sound in the porter's hall, and though discouraged by innumerable and successive failures, was ever ready to start forward with renewed attention, on every recurrence of the slightest noise!—Oh, Adela, never may you be thus condemned to drain to the very dregs the bitter cup of disappointment—of long-protracted suspense! Positive calamity is, no doubt, more stunning, more tremendous — but whether more tormenting to a spirit of any firmness, I should find it hard to believe.—To what resource, do you imagine, I at

length applied for some alleviation of inquietude?—My thoughts full of your image—my whole imagination employed in reverting to former scenes in which you had borne a part, I suddenly recollected the juvenile correspondence which, for some time after my departure from Dr. Hampden's had subsisted between us. Your letters I had faithfully preserved, and to them I now turned, as a miser to his hoarded treasure, and found a relief unspeakable in their perusal. The innocent tone of affection with which they were written—their mixture of archness and simplicity—the goodness of heart which every sentence indicated, touched me to the soul.—No other species of occupation could have fixed my wandering ideas; this, caught and enchained every faculty. What would I not have given, dearest Adela, for one letter from you at the present period breathing a similar spirit of frank attachment!—But in the midst of the consolatory pursuit in which I had engaged, a footman entered, bringing to me what I most dreaded—most wished—the supposed answer of Mr. Cleveland!—I hardly dared trust my unsteady voice to bid

him put it down—the shaking hand I must have held out to receive it from him, would have betrayed its importance, and my own uncontrolable emotion. He left the room—and then, with a sort of desperate resolution, I seized it, tore open the cover, and found that it came—from Sir Patrick Harley."

"Sir Patrick Harley!" repeated Adela—"And what could be its purport?"

"He wrote to apply for a direction to my coachmaker!—But judge, my Adela, how perversely this mortifying and unprofitable interruption, dissipated all the train of pleasurable sentiments your hoarded correspondence had called forth! I could not recover the disposition that had enabled me to enjoy them. The impatience and irritability which for a while had been suspended, recurred more powerfully than ever—and till midnight, even whilst those letters remained in view upon my table, I could do nothing but pace about the apartment, again watching for the entrance of some domestic—again listening to every real or fancied sound from below. No messenger from your father, however, arrived—and my tor-

turing uncertainty lasted through the night. —This morning brought with it the decisive and unmitigated verdict which I now entreat you, Adela, to peruse"—

He then gave into her hand, and she read with feelings impossible to describe, the following concise letter:—

"To the Earl of Ennerdale.

"My Lord,

"The proposals for my youngest "daughter with which your lordship has "thought proper to honour me, I am under "the painful necessity of absolutely de- "clining. I beg to express my acknow- "ledgements for the flattering distinction "with which you have regarded her: but, "at the same time, must be permitted to "add, that it was scarcely to be expected, "the hand which has been dyed in the "blood of the brother, could ever, with "my approbation, be united with that of "the sister.

"I have the honour to be, my Lord,

"Your Lordship's very

"Obedient servant,

"AUGUSTUS CLEVELAND."

Shuddering at the stern implacability of this haughty scroll, Adela let it fall from her hand when she had concluded it, and silently, yet with an expression of involuntary aversion, turned away her head as if afraid to let her eyes rest upon it again. Lord Ennerdale, who read her deep consternation in her looks, now said—

"You have too much generosity to tell me that I have been the architect of my own misery; yet, true it is, your father has so contrived to word his refusal, that it appears wholly the result of resentment at the past. An unconcerned, uninformed reader of these austere lines, would pronounce them justly merited, and deem me a rash and sanguinary duellist, adding insult to injury, by daring to demand from the man whose son I had challenged, and nearly slain, the hand of his daughter!—But I am *not* the fierce aggressor this letter seems to stamp me. My principles and temper are equally averse from outrage and bloodshed. Still, there are provocations which scarcely any man could be proof against, and such (in justice to myself let me say) such was that which I received

from your intemperate brother. After all, however, this much-resented duel is but *one* amongst the many reasons Mr. Cleveland might have assigned for his rejection and antipathy. He has viewed me with irreconcileable ill-will even from the period of my being the cotemporary of his son at Eton; that son's animosities he has ever made his own—has adopted all his prejudices, and sanctioned all his hostile feelings. —This I, doubtless, knew, when I first became a candidate for your favour: but building too presumptuously on the influence which my situation in life, independent of all personal regard, might obtain for me, I became voluntarily blind to the danger of incurring the repulse I now so ineffectually deplore."

"The same pernicious miscalculation has deluded us both," cried Adela: "but to talk longer of the past is equally grievous and unavailing; the future must now be our sole object of concern. It is most painful to me," she added, "to remind you, that my father has decreed I should no longer reside in this house unless your visits are suspended. Far be it from me,

selfishly to wish that you should deprive my sister and Mr. Somerville of the gratification they receive from your society. I have no desire, on the contrary, so earnest as that of insuring to them the continuance of this indulgence by my own immediate removal. Where, indeed, can I now be happier than at the good Dr. Hampden's? Where half so well, since there alone you are as intimately known and as affectionately valued as here?—I am anxious also to leave London before the return to it of my brother. The idea of seeing him immediately after the termination of this inauspicious affair, pains me more than I can express."—

"Yet, quit not your sweet sister, my Adela, one hour sooner than you originally proposed—quit her not, at least, during the few weeks she will still remain in town. I will banish myself from this loved roof most scrupulously;—nay, for the gratification of knowing, that you were not parted throughout the summer, I would exile myself from Northumberland the whole year: but Annesley and Lady Isabella, with some other friends, have volunteered to become

my guests at Mordington Castle, and I fear that it may be difficult to shake off the engagement. With hopes how different did I look forward to this annual migration!—You were, I believed, to be my nearest neighbour;—nay, more; I had already established you, in fancy, as my inmate—the mistress of my dwelling—the permanent companion of my happy life!—I already beheld you, *in my mind's eye*, wandering amidst the scenes your presence would so greatly have contributed to embellish and endear: I thought of our proximity to your sister and Mr. Somerville—to the abode now inhabited by my boy."..

"Oh, do not, do not," interrupted the distressed Adela, "recapitulate, with this ingenious cruelty, the many circumstances that would have conspired to my felicity, had such a journey been permitted me!—I must not dwell now upon visionary schemes of happiness, but seek to rest content with the mere exemption from superadded sorrow."—

"Grateful and consolatory to my heart as is the regret you thus feelingly express, let me be disinterested enough to present to

you some motives on which to found a hope of better times—some reflections capable of softening the grief of this bitter parting. Nothing on this side the grave, let us trust, can be immutable: the opposition of your father, may, therefore, from a thousand causes terminate, and our sentence of separation may be repealed. I will anxiously guard against every possibility of further irritating his resentment;—I will endeavour to cultivate the favour of the General; and. . ."

"Of the General?" interrupted Adela, changing colour—"Then you mean to become an assiduous visitor at his house?"—

The Earl could not misunderstand the agitation with which this question was hastily and involuntarily asked.—He took her hand, and pressed it, enchanted, to his lips:

"My best and *only* love! exclaimed he, —the visits, whether to that or to any other mansion on the globe, which I might make, could effect no change in this devoted heart! —It is your's unalterably, and to the attainment of the sole prize it values—the hand I now hold—will all its wishes, all its energies, henceforward be applied!"

As he spoke, his eye accidentally rested upon the ring she wore—his own unavowed offering—and, at the same moment, the observation of Adela was drawn to the same object—

"This ring," said she, with some hesitation, and regarding him with a conscious smile, "my heart has ever told me, is *your* gift. Should you not thank me for the value which I have therefore attached to it?"

"Oh value it still, sweet Adela, and wear it with even superstitious constancy! Let it be a silent memorial to you of my unfailing love,—and never, never may your eye rest upon it, without bestowing a gentle and a kind regret upon your absent Algernon!"

A loud knocking at the street door, announcing visitors, now rendered Adela urgent with him to depart. He reluctantly compelled himself to obey her, and snatching her for a moment to his heart, fervently exclaimed—

"Adela—dear Adela, farewel! I have no words to tell you what this separation costs me! Remember, that on your faith —on your firm and unwavering affection, my sole chance of earthly happiness depends.

For the softness you have shewn me during this melancholy parting, take my blessing and my thanks! Once more, farewel—be steady, be unchangeable, and whenever we may meet again, let me gratefully find, that absence has had no power to displace me, either from your memory or your heart!"

He then hastily left her.

Too much disordered to endure the thought of being seen, Adela instantly ran up to her room, and found no relief for her full heart but from the indulgence of a copious flood of tears. Whatever were the hopes to which Lord Ennerdale encouraged her to look forward, she mournfully foreboded, that all now was at an end between them. Whence, indeed, could the remotest expectation be derived of a favourable reverse in their affairs? Was it to be imagined her father would revoke his decree? Or that Julius, to gratify whose enmity it had been passed, would himself become their friend? And who else possessed over Mr. Cleveland the slightest influence? To neither of her sisters would he listen, she was assured;—to Mr. Somerville, perhaps, still less. The General, even if he had had

any weight with his brother, she well knew was too indolent in matters not relating to his own gratification, to exert it with the zealous perseverance her case demanded. Unaided, therefore, by any mediator in whose success she could confide; afflicted, and desponding, Adela half regretted the mutual explanation between herself and the Earl which had passed; and looked back to the time when, (though uncertain of his attachment) she daily beheld him, with earnest wishes that it had not flown so quickly. Whatever had been the apparent insensibility her looks and manners had testified during the whole period of her suspense, certain it is, that she had, in reality, loved him almost from the moment she had quitted the General's roof. So seldom had his assiduities been remitted since that time, that gratitude had confirmed what admiration had begun, and the happiness of seeing and conversing with him, seemed now the first requisite of her existence.

Mrs. Somerville, missing her from the drawing-room during nearly the whole morning, at length went up to enquire after her. An unreserved explanation was then

given to her of all that had passed. Adela struggled no more to conceal the true state of her feelings: she looked, and candidly acknowledged herself, thoroughly unhappy. Yet no reflections against her father escaped her; she even forebore accusing her brother. The object she alone blamed was herself, for not having better known, in a predicament of so much uncertainty, how to guard the avenues to her heart. But every thing, she observed, had of late conspired to render her nearly forgetful of the opposition which awaited her attachment. Even Jemima, by the terror she had shewn of her presumed influence over Lord Ennerdale, had seemed to imply, that she thought the obstacles to his success not wholly invincible; and the partiality indicated for her by the Annesleys; the abated austerity of the Dowager the last time they had met, added to the sanguine, though ill-founded confidence invariably cherished by Mr. and Mrs. Somerville, had contributed to lull her prudence, and silence all her fears. She professed, however, the most unlimited disposition to perfect obedience; and said, that Lord Ennerdale himself shewed a resolution to submit

to present circumstances, which, had she required it, would alone have been a lesson sufficient for her own conduct.—He had, she told her sister, solicited and obtained her promise of refusing all engagement for a twelvemonth. With respect to the correspondence in which he wished her to become a party, she was silent. The pleadings of Mrs. Somerville, joined to those of her own heart, she feared would be more than she should have fortitude to withstand: and Adela, anticipating (if it was interdicted,) the sorrow it would cost her to break it off—or the self-reproach that would attend her still carrying it on, felt sincerely reluctant to give any hope of engaging in it at all.

Towards the conclusion of this conference, tranquillizing to her spirits, from the sympathy and affection manifested for her by Mrs. Somerville, she earnestly exhorted that lady to fix an early day for the dinner at their father's; and dictated to her the most submissive message to be delivered to him from herself:—

"Tell him, my dear sister," she said, "that I humbly and implicitly acquiesce in his decision; and assure him, that Lord

Ennerdale and I have taken leave with no view of seeing each other again. Yet, if he confirms the wish, expressed in his letter, of hastening my departure from town, say, that I am ready to set out, without hesitation or delay, the instant his pleasure is made known to me.—Execute this commission with the most scrupulous exactness. My prompt obedience, dear Elinor, may avail me more than your most elaborate intercessions. I have no design in acting thus: but if I had, is not the chance greater of softening my father's rigour by docility and compliance, than by murmurs or opposition?"

The mortified chagrin of Mr. Somerville at the total failure of his long-cherished hope of beholding the union of Adela and Lord Ennerdale, was not only manifest, but even attended with unusual asperity. He menaced his wife, who vainly sought to pacify him, with making it the motive for an entire breach with Julius; and protested that nothing on earth should induce him to become the guest of her father even for a single hour!

Adela, hurt by his vehemence, and, on every account solicitous to bring him to milder feelings, sought, though with great

effort to herself, and at the risk of drawing down all his indignation upon her own head, to treat what had passed with an appearance of indifference wholly foreign to her real sentiments. She begged him not to seize upon *that* as a pretext to quarrel, which she, the principal person concerned, hoped to be able to bear with so much greater resignation; and warmly urged him to afflict neither her sister nor herself, by threats against the two individuals of their family whom it least befitted them passively to hear spoken of with intemperance.

His displeasure now, as she had justly anticipated, was levelled against her almost exclusively. He told her, she had never shewn the slightest feeling; taxed her with want of common gratitude; said she was undeserving the generous affection she had excited—and forgetting, in his rage at her imputed insensibility, his pre-conceived animosity to her father, suffered his wife to write, and appoint whatever day she chose for the expected visit.

This point settled, he flung out of the room; dined from home without giving any previous notice of his intention; and, on

his next interview with Adela, scarcely deigned either to speak to, or look at her.

CHAP. X.

MUTATION.

On the evening of the day which all but Adela spent at her father's, sad at heart, and unusually averse from seeking relief in employment, she was listening with a languid smile to the gay rattle of Christina Cleveland, who had been permitted to dine with her, when the drawing-room door suddenly opened, and she beheld Julius.

Her courage, at this sight, wholly deserted her. Exultation at her disappointment, and derision of her obvious dejection, were the sole expectations she entertained from his visit. His return to town she was not till that moment apprized of: and gladly, to avoid such an interview, would she herself have flown to the remotest corner of the kingdom.

But though inferior to her satisfaction, great was her surprise at the air and manner with which he first addressed her. He

kissed her with unwonted affection; avoided scrutinizing her countenance, and spoke in kinder accents, and used more gentle and endearing language than she had before ever experienced from him. For some time, her amazement held her silent, and she could only, at stolen intervals, regard him apprehensively, as if to ascertain whether all this was not the effect of mockery, and whether there lurked not beneath such a semblance of forbearance, a disposition to unfeeling ridicule. But nothing of such a nature could she trace; and, at length, recovering the faculty of speech, she ventured to ask him how long he had been arrived in town?

"I came this morning," answered he: "but, my dear Adela, make me some tea. You have drank your own, probably, long ago, but I have not,—and I mean to sit with you for the rest of the evening, unless you have any thing particular to do."

"Oh, nothing," answered she, more and more astonished—"I shall be extremely glad of your company. Yet, will they not, in Hertford Street, be a little hurt at your deserting them?"

"They will not even miss me. There is

other company besides the Somervilles and Alicia; and, I think, I heard a threat of music from Barbara:—you know my old aversion to her sort of harmony?"

Adela then rang the bell, and whilst her orders for tea were executing, Julius turned to his merry-hearted young cousin, and made a laughing apology for having spoken with so little ceremony of Barbara's talents:—

"But the truth is, my dear Christy," added he, "you were so unusually quiet, and are so easily eclipsed by a screen or a high-backed chair, that I did not, at that moment, perceive you, and forgot that you were in the room."

Christina accepted this excuse, awkward as it was, with her accustomed good humour, and Adela, exerting herself to appear less depressed, asked him to give her some account of his recent excursion.

He smiled, and, she fancied, even coloured, as he answered—"oh, I can tell you nothing about it that would at all amuse you!"

However, he stated, in general terms, that the country was beginning to be in

great beauty; that he had never enjoyed fine weather and fine scenery, so much; that he had made several new and delightful additions to his acquaintance, and upon the whole, had been, for the space of a fortnight the happiest fellow in existence!

"And where was all this felicity experienced?"

"Why—at a place you never heard the name of in your life."

"And is that a reason why I never should?"

"I assure you that you would be none the wiser if I told it you;—it is a single house, out of the direction of any public road, and in a county which you know nothing at all about."

Adela was too cautious of provoking him to persist in her enquiries, and finding her willing to let the subject drop, he desired to hear what her plans were to be for the rest of the summer?

"As soon," answered she, "as Elinor and Mr. Somerville leave town—perhaps before, I shall return into Devonshire."

"And whose arrangement is this?"

"My father's."

Julius said nothing, but he looked by no means pleased; and it was some time before he could prevail upon himself to resume the conversation upon general subjects. Adela, as little desirous to pursue the discourse as he was, gladly consented, (after two or three unsuccessful attempts to talk with serenity of indifferent things) to sit down to the instrument and play to him some of his favourite marches and French country-dances.

During her performance, Christina was sent for, and took her leave. Julius then, seated himself close beside his sister, but somewhat in the shade, and bidding her cease all that "noisy clatter," asked her, for the first time in his life, to sing him a slow and soothing song.

She enquired whether it should be in English, Scotch, or Italian?

"Oh, English;—let it be Mozart's, *forget me not.*"

"Why, my dear Julius, I had no suspicion you knew that such a composer as Mozart had ever existed? Where did you pick up this information about him, and

what has made you so suddenly grow fond of singing?"

"I always," replied he, with some hesitation, "was fond of it, when it had any soul and feeling! Barbara's distracting flourishes, indeed, never were much to my taste. Her singing is all affectation, and ill-executed scamper and rapidity; and with regard to her playing, whatever she undertakes, sounds to me like a series of mistakes! I know that it is all very fine, and, that however confused the composition seems, to ears untaught, she will eventually find her way out of the maze: but, meanwhile, she sets my teeth on edge, and leaves me no wish but to make as speedy an escape as possible."

Adela, happy that her unpretending efforts could so much better amuse him, and glad to be spared the necessity of talking, sought for the air he had desired her to sing, and performed it with such genuine sensibility of expression, that it was evident her heart entered into the task, and associated to the words which she was repeating, remembrances the most applicable to her present circumstances, and the most affecting

to her present feelings. Julius seemed aware, when it was too late, that he had exacted from her a trying effort. He thanked her with great cordiality when she paused, and as if to afford some relief to her spirits, was proceeding to ask for a more enlivening strain, when the carriage drove up to the door which brought home her sisters and Mr. Somerville.

After their return, Julius speedily took leave, and Adela remained impressed with a more favourble opinion of his delicacy and feeling than she had ever before been encouraged to entertian. Not once had he, in the most distant degree, alluded to her division from Lord Ennerdale,—not once had he even insinuated that he knew what had occurred: but sociable and friendly, she had again found him the same amiable and affectionate companion he once before had shewn himself during her temporary residence in Hertford Street.

"Oh that this amicable spirit may last!" she internally exclaimed; "from whatever cause it proceeds, how gratefully shall I hail and cherish it!"

Mrs. Erington now gave her an account

of the day they had spent, not much calculated, (had it been passed any where but at her father's) to make Adela regret her own exclusion.

"We had to meet us," said Alicia, "our gallant, but hollow uncle, his proud consort, and two of their hopeful progeny. Besides these, we were honoured with the presence of a noble senator of the realm, and of a battered old admiral, who differed in politics, and snarled at each other during the whole dinner; of two scientific professors, unwilling to be intelligible, and therefore, self condemned to be mute; of a popular, but pert poet, whose snip-snap manners have destroyed in me all the enthusiasm his works had excited; and lastly, of a pair of venerable spinsters Mrs. Lucretia, and Mrs. Arethusa Macphyllida, great-aunts of every nephew and niece our ample family can boast."

"And who," said Adela, "amidst this assemblage, did you select to talk with?"

"Why, my neighbour, the chaste Lucretia; and she gave me some very valuable hints for compounding anti-spasmodic medicines,—for relieving the anguish of gnat-

bites, and wasp-stings,—for polishing mahogany tables,—and improving quince marmalade!"

"And what did her sister talk about?"

"Really, I can't very well tell; she addressed herself chiefly to Mr. Somerville, and, I believe, upon the subject of pastoral poetry: I overheard something about eclogues and idyls, that instantly made me turn my head another way."

"And why?"

"Oh, because shepherds and their bleating flocks, *et les ruisseaux, avec leurs cousins les ormeaux, et leurs frères les moineaux, et leurs bisaïeuls les sentimens*, always put me into a passion—or make me fall asleep!"

"I am afraid, said Mrs. Somerville, "that you may apply to yourself a quotation from another witty foreigner, and frankly acknowledge, that you have no taste *pour les plaisirs innocents!*"

"Why, certainly not much, if they are all to be derived from descriptions of sportive lambkins, and murmuring brooks, and sighing swains! The simplicity of these rural images will never suit my vitiated fancy, till the harmless picture is enlivened by

the intrusion into it of a few wolves and foxes!"

She then, with a yawn expressive of the weariness so tame a subject gave her, bade them all good night, and retired to her room.

The day that had been appointed for the christening of Mr. and Mrs. Somerville's infant son was now approaching. On its eve, Lord Ennerdale wrote to say, that as it unfortunately appeared incumbent upon him to resign the pleasure of standing for his young godson in person, he requested Mr. Somerville to become his proxy. He then expatiated (but in strict confidence to Mrs. Somerville, to whom the letter was addressed) upon the subject of his late grievous rejection:—"Wretched as it has made me," said he, "and cheering as it would be, I am "well assured, to your generous sister, to "know that I possessed any secret motive "of consolation, yet, for the universe would "I not have her suspect the source whence "such consolation is derived!—It originates "not in the senseless idea that Mr. Cleve-"land's purposes are to be changed:—I am "far from being so abandoned as to found

" it upon a wish or hope of his premature
" dissolution.—No—I rest my expectations
" solely upon Adela herself. She has given
" me a promise, which I trust she regards
" as sacred, to preserve her freedom invio-
" late for the ensuing year. Yet her mind
" is at this moment under the influence,
" partly of terror, partly of an overstrained
" sense of filial obligation.—May not time
" weaken her terrors, and take from her fi-
" lial scruples somewhat of their force?
" She loves me, dearest Mrs. Somerville!—
" Can she then endure to consign me to
" lasting sorrow? It would startle, and
" perhaps deeply offend her, were I now to
" express a belief, that the unqualified ri-
" gour of her purposed obedience can ever
" relax. But, if with apparent resignation,
" I submit, during a twelvemonth, to the
" sentence that has been passed against us;
" —if I keep alive in her heart the affection
" which she has avowed for me, by engag-
" ing her in a frequent correspondence, is
" there not reason to hope that she may, at
" the end of that interval, or, at least, when
" she comes of age, find her stability a little
" shaken? And would not you, my indul-

" gent friend, be the first to favour my cause,
" and to assist in convincing her, that hav-
" ing attained the period prescribed by the
" laws for becoming entitled to dispose of
" her own hand, she ought no longer to
" condemn me to a life of lingering disap-
" pointment?—Were Mr. Cleveland ever to
" step forward as a just and impartial parent
" —were he to take her to his heart, and
" receive her beneath his roof, then would
" my prospects indeed be dreary!—The love
" which Adela entertains for me, might
" not be proof against such measures—her
" renunciation of me would probably be ir-
" revocable, and her father's triumph com-
" plete.—Whilst affairs, however, remain
" upon their present footing, there seems
" reason to indulge more flattering antici-
" pations: and these alone now support
" my courage, and moderate my repinings.

" I intercede, dear Mrs. Somerville, most
" earnestly, for your aid in inducing Adela
" to consent to the epistolary intercourse I
" proposed to her. All my expectations
" rest upon that foundation."

Mrs. Somerville, desirous of furnishing her husband with what he might deem a

reasonable excuse for giving up the resentment against Adela of which he was himself becoming weary, shewed him, under an injunction of inviolable secresy, the Earl's letter. It produced the desired effect. If Lord Ennerdale was content with the degree of attachment that had been manifested for him, his friends, assuredly, had no right to be more fastidious,—if, also, he was content to practise present submission to the restrictions that were enjoined him, his friends were not entitled to be more refractory. All things considered then, Mr. Somerville resolved to seek a reconciliation with his fair sister, and still to cherish her as fondly as ever, even upon her own terms.

Adela was not difficult to appease. She gladly extended to him a friendly hand, and the most perfect concord once more established itself between them.

On questioning Mrs. Somerville, with great anxiety, to know what answer her father had returned to her message, she was told by that lady, that having found no opportunity of delivering it to him herself, she had ventured to entrust it to a proxy, who had professed the truest zeal in service, and

promised to repeat it most faithfully and circumstantially:

"Whom can you possibly mean?

"One whom I saw nearly as much interested in your affairs as myself; one who enquired after you with looks and words of unaffected solicitude—Julius, in short!—Have I done very wrong?"

"I should have thought, dear Elinor, that you had at least done very idly," replied Adela, "had I heard this account previous to my last interview with him: but his conduct on that occasion was so every way calculated to give me confidence in his regard, that I am far more glad than sorry you chose such a delegate."

END OF VOL. IV.

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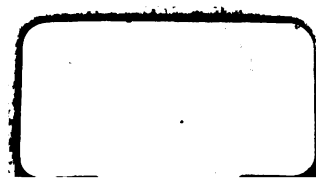
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